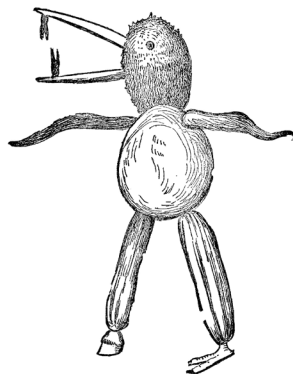


jubilat

offers 108 poems &
other contributions
from 105 poets &
writers—gathered since
November 8, 2016
—in paroxysm, comfort,
disturbance,
provocation, blaze, aid,
or connection.

jubilat

november 8, 2016



SPECIAL ISSUE 30.5 EDITORS
Jon Ruseski, Lori Shine, Dara Wier

SPECIAL ISSUE COVER DESIGN
Meghan Dewar

EDITORS
Kevin González, Caryl Pagel, Emily Pettit

SPECIAL ISSUES EDITOR
Arda Collins

ASSISTANT EDITOR
John Goodhue

MANAGING EDITOR
Halie Theoharides

ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR
Amanda Dahill-Moore

DESIGN EDITOR
Mary Austin Speaker

WEB EDITOR
Lauren Haldeman

FOUND CONTENT EDITOR
Halie Theoharides

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Sierra Rittue

READERS
Hannah Bishop, Brittany Capps,
Zachary Elbourne, Elmira Elvazova,
Logan Hill, Joseph Johnson, Nick Maione

FOUNDING PUBLISHER AND EDITORS
Robert N. Casper, Christian Hawkey,
Kelly LeFave, Michael Teig

Special thanks to Faith Seddon of
Amherst's Collective Copies for patience
with this issue's speed, and to Jono Tosch
for initial encouragement and support,
and to all the poets, writers, and friends
who contributed to this effort.

jubilat is published twice yearly at the
University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Business & Editorial Address:
jubilat
W 342 South College
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003-9269

Subscriptions: Individuals \$20 per year or
\$35 for two years. Institutions \$30 per
year or \$55 for two years. Single issues
are available for \$10.

Distributed by Ingram and Ubiquity.

jubilat is funded in part by
the National Endowment for the Arts,
the Massachusetts Cultural Council &
the UMass Arts Council, and private
donors.

For submission information, please visit
us at www.jubilat.org.

© 2016 jubilat. No portions of jubilat
may be reproduced without permission.

ISSN: 1529-0999
Printed in Massachusetts



This publisher is a proud member of



COUNCIL OF LITERARY MAGAZINES & PRESSES
www.clmp.org



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

jubilat asked poets and writers and friends to send us something they've had on their minds these days since November 8, 2016. Within a short time we'd been sent 108 poems from 105 poets, writers and friends from around the country. The election had the effect of leading many to look for words, not to explain anything, not so much to respond directly, more to feel something just a little more than wordlessness can feel.

When something happens that registers as leaving us speechless—powerfully felt but without a name, without an aim, without much understanding—often it's toward poetry to which we tend; we go to poems to see if within what poetry says it is we find what we need.

Here we were searching for words—to bring something approaching what we are seeking often without knowing what we are seeking, a little closer, even just a bit closer to understanding something about that feeling of being helpless that accompanies wordlessness.

To be a little less helpless on account of someone's words, that is what we're hoping this special edition of jubilat brings.

Here are many voices registering thoughts, notes, and tones as fall turns into winter.

CONTENTS

- 1 *Catalogue of Dissolving Views*
MIRA BARTÓK
- 3 *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*
BRYAN BECK
- 5 *Little Elegy*
LISA BESKIN
- 6 *Next Time*
LUKE BLOOMFIELD
- 7 *My Pregnancy Was a Long and Happy Nightmare*
EMILY BLUDWORTH DE BARRIOS
- 10 <3
ANA BOZICEVIC
- 11 *Going On*
HANNAH BROOKS-MOTL
- 13 *extending this line of reasoning into the dark*
LAYNIE BROWNE
- 14 *Testify*
MICHAEL BURNS (VIA SHANNON BURNS)
- 17 *Avocado a la Ionesco*
TINA CANE
- 18 *Notes on Turning Around*
DAN CHELOTTI
- 23 *The Cloud*
JACK CHRISTIAN
- 25 *Comfort Dog*
ASHLEY COLLEY
- 26 368
ARDA COLLINS

- 27 *[untitled]*
JESSICA COMOLA
- 28 *The Venus of Willendorf Is Not a Ten*
CONSTANCE CONGDON
- 29 *Poetry Is Short For KICKING IN THE DOOR*
CA CONRAD
- 30 *Clear November Morning*
WILLIAM CORBETT
- 31 *The Branches of Clowns*
MICHAEL EARL CRAIG
- 33 *He Emblazons a T on the Moon on the Brief Night it Is Super*
HEATHER CHRISTLE
- 34 *Raking, Pittsburgh*
JIM DANIELS
- 36 *Water Hymn*
KYLE DARGAN
- 38 *On a Clear Night*
DOT DEVOTA
- 40 *Upon the Death of a Really Excellent Singer*
CHRISTOPHER DEWEESE
- 41 *Rant*
DIANE DI PRIMA (VIA PETER GIZZI)
- 45 *from Finite Criteria*
JOSEPH DONAHUE
- 46 *Roof*
TIMOTHY DONNELLY
- 48 *Thus Spake the Gutter King to His Minions*
KAREN DONOVAN
- 50 *Donald Trump, President, United States of America*
KRISTEN ELDE
- 51 *Prompts*
CORWIN ERICSON

- 52 *The Orchard Near Winter*
MICHAEL ESTES
- 54 *Mother*
TARFIA FAIZULLAH (VIA RACHEL ABRAMOWITZ)
- 55 *A Week and a Day*
JESSICA FJELD
- 57 *Vessel*
LEORA FRIDMAN
- 59 *The Prophet of Night*
LAURA M. FURLAN
- 60 *Aphorism*
ADAM GRABOWSKI
- 61 *Unidentified*
KIMIKO HAHN
- 62 *Everything, Including the Bones*
CATHRYN HANKLA
- 64 *I Could Love*
STEVE HEALEY
- 66 *Brother No One*
BRIAN HENRY
- 68 *The World, My Friends, My Enemies, You, and the Earth*
NAZIM HIKMET (VIA LORI SHINE)
- 70 *A Quiet Afternoon at the Office*
BRENDA HILLMAN (VIA BRETT FLETCHER LAUER)
- 71 *november 9, 2016*
LAUREN HUNTER
- 73 *When Birds Collide*
JULIA JOHNSON
- 74 *Headstones*
KATHRANNE KNIGHT
- 75 *The New Workshop*
BRIAN LAIDLAW

- 78 *Obligations Are Privileges*
 SETH LANDMAN
- 79 *History Lesson Beginning With a Fragment from Aeschylus*
 NICK LANTZ
- 82 *The New Colossus*
 EMMA LAZARUS (VIA LYNN MELNICK)
- 83 *American Dream*
 KELLY LE FAVE
- 85 *Two Poems*
 LESLE LEWIS
- 88 *Gaps in the Fence*
 KATE LINDROOS
- 89 *Florida*
 PAUL LISICKY
- 91 *For the Next President*
 ERIC LORBERER
- 93 *Suddenly We Find Ourselves Surrounded Entirely*
 JULIA MADSEN
- 96 *from The Voronezh Notebooks*
 OSIP MANDELSTAM (VIA LESLEY YALEN)
- 97 *Leaving Earth*
 ADRIAN MATEJKA
- 99 *from My Utmost Devotion*
 ANDREW McALPINE
- 101 *Two Poems*
 SHANE McCRAE
- 103 *Not Looking Up*
 FRANCES McCUE
- 105 *[untitled]*
 MICHAEL MEDEIROS
- 106 *American*
 EDIE MEIDAV

- 107 *Poem Entering the Apple Valley Target*
LYNN MELNICK
- 109 *Misgivings*
HERMAN MELVILLE (VIA SETH LANDMAN)
- 110 *Taboo*
CHRISTOPHER MERRILL
- 112 *Homeland*
PHILIP METRES
- 113 *[untitled]*
ALBERT MOBILIO
- 114 *On the Occasion of the Second Week in November*
ANTHONY MOLL
- 115 *Cross-Over Sonnets*
LUCY MORAN
- 118 *Stone is Stone*
BLUEBERRY MORNINGSNOW AND ALETA LANIER
- 119 *All of It*
ALICIA MOUNTAIN
- 120 *Lactorium*
LAURA MULLEN
- 123 *Sea Glass*
ALICIA REBECCA MYERS
- 124 *Two Poems*
TRAVIS NICHOLS
- 127 *from Of Being Numerous*
GEORGE OPPEN (VIA MICHELLE TARANSKY)
- 129 *Tomorrows*
JOE PAN
- 131 *The More*
SETH PARKER
- 132 *Zoo*
ERIN PERRY

- 133 *Contagion*
 KIKI PETROSINO
- 134 *Outland Empire*
 BOOMER PINCHES
- 135 *'America I Do Not Call Your Name Without Hope'*
 DEAN RADER
- 136 *Golden Rule*
 JESSICA RAPISARDA
- 137 *America as the bodies of two gay girls in a pond at night*
 BRYNNE REBELE-HENRY
- 139 *Compassion for the Loser*
 ELIZABETH ROBINSON
- 141 *Elegy for Jim*
 MATTHEW ROHRER
- 142 *Handprints on a Paper Lantern*
 DAN ROSENBERG
- 143 *Hot Mess*
 JON RUSESKEI
- 145 *Two Poems*
 LAURIE SAURBORN
- 148 *Twifold*
 LAUREN SHAPIRO
- 149 *Desired Appreciation*
 SOLMAZ SHARIF (VIA DAVID FEINSTEIN)
- 151 *Address*
 JOHN SIERACKI
- 153 *The Partial Explanation*
 CHARLES SIMIC (VIA JONO TOSCH)
- 154 *Song 1108*
 JORDAN STEMPELMAN
- 156 *The Dark Ages*
 BIANCA STONE

- 162 *The Ice Cream Man*
JAMES TATE (VIA DARA WIER)
- 164 *[untitled]*
LENA TSYKYNOSKA
- 165 *Excitement Tax*
JOHN VINCENT
- 166 *Spring Breaks*
WILLIAM WALTZ
- 168 *Two Poems*
ROSANNE WASSERMAN
- 170 *Loving You Is Complicated*
ARISA WHITE
- 176 *I Look Very Much Forward to Being Your President*
LAURA WILLWERTH
- 180 *I Dreamed The Senator Announced on National Television:*
JOHN YAU
- 182 *Ant-Head Sutures*
DEAN YOUNG
- 183 *Poem Written With Buson*
MATTHEW ZAPRUDER
- 186 *Acknowledgments*

Back Cover Art:
It's How You Play the Game
ROSAMOND PURCELL

CATALOGUE OF DISSOLVING VIEWS

Mira Bartók

from the Magic Lantern Slides of C.W. Briggs, 1874

And God Created Light
The Formation of Eve
The Agony in the Garden
Mater Dolorosa, the First Murder
The Wish Bone, the Youthful Angler
The Return to Nazareth, Mercy's Dream
And God Created America
The Spaniel and the Duck

And God Created America
Retriever and Pheasant, Setter and Grouse
Butcher and Rabbit, Night's Swift Dragons
An Awakened Sorrow, the Prayer, the Voyage
America. My Pretty One,
My Sweetheart, My Wife
The Waters are Coming
Beware

America, the Babe of Bethlehem
The White Rose, the High Life, the Stag at Bay
The Empty Cradle
America, the Lost Children
The Mother's Dream
A Dancing Girl Reposing
A Winter Morning
America, the Lean and Slipped Pantaloons

The Pilgrim, the Penitent, the Birth of Despair
America, the Shining One
The Welcome Shelter, America
A Scanty Meal
America, a Sting of Nettle, the Triumph of Love, the Sheep
America, the Sloth
The Blacksmith, the Porcupine
The Duck Bill and Tapir and Bonnie Lass

A Map of the Moon
America, the Zebra, America
The Sacrifice
The Flight from the Garden
America

TALES OF MOONLIGHT AND RAIN

Bryan Beck

November 2016

The fool sleeps amidst the stores.
Until he doesn't. "The sober dawn awakens
a different man," et cetera. He rights his armor,
gives his burro a friendly whip. Outside,
businessmen crowd the plaza with reputable ties.

They are really "hawking their wares,"
a single sad sap crying against the monolith.
A young cowboy nurses a broken finger.
A boatman's daughter pleads for vassalhood,
lost in a heroic dream, the lone fighter

in an ill-defined civil war. Nearby,
grayish glaze leaks from the shuttered kiln.
(Symbolism if ever we've seen it.)
A thin trail points out the horizon. I think:
The hills are an orange smear

on the grotesque portrait of time,
shrouded in a near-professional mist.
Then a family passes, complete
with stroller and assorted vegetables.
(They promptly begin stomping the flowers.)

(The fool whips his burro off to the side.)
In the distance a child stokes a small fire.

Having cast all human fripperies aside,
he scratches the dirt near his feet with a twig,
and then it's clear that he's been scratching

this same dirt for generations. Still,
the days continue to accumulate
into nearly accountable figures. Birds leave
and return to little fanfare. The streets house all
the familiar bicycles and rusted signs. Later

there will be nightmares.
Faces devoured by maggots, faces with six horns
and five noses, horses rising on ashen wings.
We'll spend years searching for acceptable extenuations.
"We were born here," and such.

LITTLE ELEGY

Lisa Beskin

Like a genie the hour pulls itself up
by a rope and disappears: head,
torso, legs and slippered feet.
The rope, too, vanishes,
and the walls, ceiling and roof.
What's left, cruelly, is memory.
Who will rebuild the house?

NEXT TIME

Luke Bloomfield

I look out and see useless rail segments
crossed with less definite debris

There's nowhere to hide this time. Next time will
be better I say curling up in the end of this sentence.

And look out. Here come sheep—unimpressive exclamation
marks of a wet fall day—chewing under bedraggled flags.

Could you not cross us out.

MY PREGNANCY WAS A LONG AND HAPPY NIGHTMARE

Emily Bludworth de Barrios

My pregnancy
was a long and happy nightmare
During which I ate
pint-sized tubs of ice cream and walked around the block
Becoming more tubby and unwieldy
as if living in the skin of a drum
Wielding and propelling my belly
feeling dreamy and druggy in the suburbs under the sun
I walked around the block
and watched episodes of The Twilight Zone
In 1960s America
it was silver and gray and all the people had disappeared
The tick of a clock
rang out
Men spoke in voices that were
urgent and clipped
Women languished in the oppressive heat
of a wet, dying sun
In The Twilight Zone the world was always
dying
In our imaginations
the world always dies
Drowned or burned or infected or
contaminated out
By imagining a death so huge
hoping to infuse our daily lives with sweetness or urgency by contrast

The world dies
how sweet is this morning
The world dies
how urgent my life
There is a belief that life
should be spent leaning forward as if squinting into a bracing wind
As if life's juice or marrow or interior liquid
can be drained or squeezed or sucked
If the world dies I hope it will be
a cinematic death
A beautiful woman
laying down in green grass in a dewy forest
A golden grey mob tearing itself apart,
full of great emotion
When the world dies I would prefer it to be
without disappointment, shame, or regret
Shame hangs on a man's neck
like a terrible bell
Joaquín when he arrived arrived
with no shame upon him
Instead he has a sweetness or urgency
inside him
For example he is pleased
with the bath's warm water
He is pleased with his
small naked body
The world when he looks out across it

is a field of universal truths
It sways or rings with
unplucked truth

< 3

Ana Bozicevic

And even now
Even in the (I can't
Believe I'm saying
It) the Trump
Economy (not believing
Is my privilege) the greatest
Hurt is seeing
The back of someone
Who looks like you at the bar
Jet hair trans skin
But it's ok
This pain is how
I know
That love will win

GOING ON

Hannah Brooks-Motl

In bed could hear
the smoke
detector die —
heard luxury
its cruel sigh.
Whole worlds lost
to a sloping
hand.
Viewed the ebill
dragged my foot.
Between them
remoteness
that delicate death.
A membrane
a cloak.
Pale or bright red.
One hand
on the arm
and not
on the wheel.
Her voice bright
after getting fucked
in a boring way.
Hearing those atoms
that muscle
and dirt
in the city

of spirit.
The full
wet moon
an inch
above me
and another inch
of condos —
the chronicle
tells many lies
about change.
Sirens, icons
bacon, eggs.
I drank a whole.
I did a bunch.
The rhythm ended
in I didn't
want. You
weren't. They're not.
Heard the brass
assembling
the annals
unloved
the ache
going on.

EXTENDING THIS LINE OF REASONING INTO THE DARK

Laynie Browne

I'm tired of closing my eyes to find immemorial forces, imaginary affections, undying proclamations of affinity. Heroines may lose their quay, face unexpected omphalos and stumble on hidden fetuses. Intoxication begins in unknowing another, and is ultimately confused with that broader category of the unknowable, so easy to love. Hosting hives in a hollow trunk.

TESTIFY

Michael Burns

I don't want no angry god
I don't want no jealous god
I don't want no vengeance is mine I will repay god

I don't want no testing god, no
Abraham, let's see if you can stick a knife
into that fat sucker of a son of yours god
No Devil, I'll starve him, strip him, put boils on his head
and then you see if you can tempt him god

And I don't want no
gay hating
women hating
any-race-but-white hating
sex/naked/flesh hating
knowledge and the love of knowledge hating
god

And I can't hold with any
Yes, those were your children
lying dead in their own bright blood
shot down by other children
on a sunny noon
with deer rifles, with a sniper's aim,
but all things work together for good for those who love the lord
god

But I might want
an old-fashioned buzzing, humming blue light
that I can hang outside on a summer night
and all of my insect problems
will come flying to it
thinking they have found their Publishers Clearing House letter,
their holy goblet, their boat on the lake, their flat in the Village,
their love potion or youth elixir, their Ecstasy and a willing partner,
just to get their little bug-faced,
scrawny, aggravating asses zapped
god

And maybe I want
a get so excited you have to dance and kick out your leg
like David before the Ark
or Tina Turner, or Duane Allman on Eat a Peach
or Jimmy Swaggart on national TV
where all the people raise up their arms
and wait for the power to come in through their palms
like healing, like nails
god

Or a caught in a trap like the one my grandfather made
with a wood box and a door and a trip stick
and eyes peering out back there in the darkness
and something like fur you can put your hands into
and feel where the strange heart beats
god

From the burning bush
or the lilac, the dogwood,
out of the storm, the rain and wind
where I have hidden myself in the rock's face,
a come to me in that still small voice
god

Can I get an Amen? Yes, thank you
I am bone tired of meanness
I need you
to cough me up from the belly of the whale, God

AVOCADO A LA IONESCO

Tina Cane

for Greg Pardlo

We didn't want to be rhinoceri to have thick skin or to have
to thicken it we didn't want to be of indeterminate color didn't want
to turn on each other into each other or be forced to be swept up
by forces we didn't want to put a ring on it didn't want
to cash it all in to carry hot sauce in our bags or to pretend

What we wanted was avocados to put on the ugly truths
to make each green but unsustainable artisanal yet inclusive
to use avocados like they use full breasts to call attention
to the thing we want addressed for our plight is not pornography

NOTES ON TURNING AROUND

Dan Chelotti

How can I appreciate this woodpecker with the red red head on the dead branch above the busted up car without giving sway to the crisis of depreciation?

Does the mockingbird in the bush on the side of the repaired road down near where they have water shows want to be shared?

I watch my desire to capture give way to the desire to live. I can make an image but I can't take it with me.

I am learning to not only lean in on the curls of milkweed coming out of the pod, but to step back and turn around and measure the distances between myself and the trees on the rise.

I have the hardest time breathing when I crush on myself.

*

We all need sanctuary. Red leaves clinging to a young Oak in November. A couple walks by listening to a tune: Baby hold me closer in the back of your car.

Don't hate on the soundtrack. Don't hate on anything if you can help it. Don't forget that I am here for you, little spider on the rock in the sun. I am always here for you.

I'll only take what the life will give. For example, down by the shore of the Oxbow there is a folding chair impressing itself on fallen leaves. I pick it up to unfold it and laugh as the water sluices down my sleeve. This is my America.

*

A boat goes by to give us waves. Three days. Three days since we saw the rising of the dark lord. I must activate my role.

Wave. Wave. Wave. I am the birch-wizard. I wear a blue hoodie and wield fairy stones.

On the evening after the dark lord's rising, I walked naiad-high into the field and met the eyes of a stag.

The stag stared me down as his ladies bolted. And then he bolted. I watched them bolt.

I stuck out my chest and crossed my arms tight. I sneered my bottom lip up under my top. And I leaned into a hoofy walk, and I hoofed it down a nearby road with open views of the mountain.

American flags surrounded the houses of treeless yards.

As I bolted down the street, I almost charged the man riding the big yellow lawnmower. But I stopped myself and bolted on. I felt for the weight of my antlers, intoned, Make every passing a meeting. Make every passing a meeting. But I couldn't. The stag mask was stuck.

*

Impersonation is not transformation. Impersonation is a mask.

Despots are addicted to ripping off masks so they can continue to keep their own masks fixed. All despots have two masks. They can't transform. They just switch. They work to bring us together, they say.

Facts are the easiest masks for a skilled mask-ripper to rip.

I once taught a prisoner imprisoned for life a constraint. I said, I write one line and you write the next. Oh, he said, you mean a new rule for the volleyball?

I bolt into a thicket. The thicket is impassable. But I have passed impassable thickets before one time in high school me and Phil and someone whose name I forget smoked weed in the woods and Phil knew a shortcut back to his place we just had to go this way and so we went that way until we were all marked up and the sun was setting and we still weren't where we were which was in Phil's house you get through a thicket by getting ahead of yourself.

Let's not get ahead of ourselves, America.

*

After Perseus slays the Gorgon, he doesn't Gronk-spike the head. He wraps it up. He cares for it. He makes the ground soft with a bed of leaves, and on top of that he strews little branches of plants born under water, and on this he places Medusa's head, face down.

I make myself rabbit small and hop into the thicket. I fold my legs and rake the dead leaves to me, to me. I bend close to the pile and drop my tears onto the leaves. And on this pile of humility, I place my stag's head, face down.

The thicket gods will protect it.

I turn around, and hop out of the thicket, and turn back into a man.

*

I listen to a voicemail my grandmother left me. I called her and left her a voicemail and asked her what had happened to America. She tells me that we are the kind of friends who can say anything to each other and not be judged. And that is the America she loves.

*

I have worshipped at altars of water my whole life. Hell, I was born on Brook St.

I pace the terms of my declaration of peace on the banks and return to my car. I lean against the trunk and watch as hundreds of crows descend upon the wheatfield, and I summon Van Gogh.

It is good to love many things, for therein lies the true strength, and whosoever loves much performs much, and can accomplish much, and what is done in love is well done.

I look at this Death card and a guy in a SUV stops in the middle of the road to capture the crows with the lens that protrudes from the window. I can't see the guy. Terminate, Terminate, he says.

I turn around and look back down the slope to the still water. I look up at the slate in the sky. I spin and spin and shotgun a hedgehog out in front of the SUV, and walk over, and ask him if I can see his pictures.

I look in the tiny screen at the wheatfield with crows and see the images signifying the end of the wheel. And also that the world is a wheel. And that it is turning.

*

Let's always be saying farewell, I say.

Let's always be saying, What's your name, friend?

I am so full of saying that I don't notice my friend sitting over on the other side of the café.

I stand up and turn around. There are so many faces on the walls. I choose my own and walk over.

So Sophia called me last night, my friend begins. And I listen and I eat a salad with candied ginger on it and I laugh as the thousands of transformations of her maskless face pass, alive in the wisdom that this is the only chance I will ever have to fight for love.

I step on the chariot and nod to the blue-faced God. Charge, he tells me. Charge.

THE CLOUD

Jack Christian

Oh, The Things You'll Put Yourself In
is what they read us,
and gave us all commemorative Whirlpools,
emblazoned Class of '96
and the valedictorian's, hers was a centrifuge.

But, that was prep school,
Montpelier, Vermont, the one Frank M.
penned fictional memoir about,
and did occasionally attend
its carbuncular halls and thatches.

Now, they can all forget themselves...

What I want to talk about is how even keel I feel
sitting between the houseplants Spidey and Guy Spidey.

Who cares the nasturtium died?
The pickle plant returned – we thought it dead –
and I sowed the whole balcony with rosemary,
went inside, did this image search:

There's the Rhine like a parking lot...
Isle of Skye and its gleaming...
and a thoughtful one of man-pushing-lawnmower

at magic hour on the album cover
of the band we liked way back
liked for their 10 or 12 minute songs,
for how in their dust beam
we could fade and fade out...

Yeah, it was kind of like that, omnipresent,
or by extension...
but when you consider the photo taken from above by helicopter
you know again this narrative of surveillance.

There's a word I remember, friends,
in our apartment
with its supreme jerry-rigging...

A word for the internet fritzes
attributable maybe to static.

The word is "equanimous"
it means nothing
not anything
not ever
getting done.

COMFORT DOG

Ashley Colley

When the shooting stops
I call for comfort dog, remains
tightly sealed in its room

Imagine it like death or love
ear to a wall and panting

I think it wants language
or food

Some saint may let it loose
but for now watch its breath
stretch the walls

Watch it ball up
when the shooting starts and crawl
toward a worn out corner

It won't find words
but possibly some give in the trim

Possibly some room to spread out later

So when you call it can be there
taking up space

So when you call it can try to be there
taking shape in this space

Arda Collins

The sun is death

land burns

into a shade of vision

a trachea is a bone

and a pancreas and a liver together flower up a piece of time

The International Monetary Fund isn't finished yet

forest patterns red, yellow, ocean, and through

blackened aqua round continent lows and prepare

deaths to go forward. Space

leans towards what's been when

a cheetah squints in the sun

it shows the largest person shouldn't be obliterated;

gloss the pointelle blue

a wet duct blister and glistening arrow

shine a stomach's beat.

[UNTITLED]

Jessica Comola

smell in the flowers

one/two/three/four/five/six

blow out the candles

one/two/three/four/five/six

smell in the flowers

one/two/three/four/five/six

blow out the candles

one/two/three/four/five/six

smell in the flowers

one/two/three/four/five/six

blow out the candles

one/two/three/four/five/six

smell in the flowers

one/two/three/four/five/six

blow out the candles

one/two/three/four/five/six

smell in the flowers

one/two/three/four/five/six

blow out the candles

one/two/three/four/five/six

smell in the flowers

one/two/three/four/five/six

blow out the candles

one/two/three/four/five/six

smell in the flowers

one/two/three/four/five/six

blow out the candles

one/two/three/four/five/six

smell in the flowers

one/two/three/four/five/six

blow out the candles

one/two/three/four/five/six

blow out the candles

one/two/three/four/five/six

THE VENUS OF WILLENDORF IS NOT A TEN

Constance Congdon

Grabbed by the pussy,
I'm awake. I'd been dreaming
Of a brown boy sailing a silver bird
Into a glass tower, filling the sky
With paper snow and body parts.

My grandson has come to me
Standing on the arm of my comfortable chair.
I'm afraid he'll fall but if I grab him around the legs,
He'll collapse backward, bending at the knees,
Into my books and notebooks on my glass-topped end table,
Spilling all of it, to land bloody, injured, on the floor beside me.
So I gently talk him down until he is safe in my arms.

"Come to me, nation, world,
I am powerful in my endurance
My lap is ample and
My thighs are fat with love
Even with an ogre
Gripping my pussy."

POETRY IS SHORT FOR KICKING IN THE DOOR

CA Conrad

A
poet
for those dead
before they die
it is good to be high
maintenance outside your price
range once in awhile a rush when
flint strikes a poem making us
so much older than last night we
used to get rid of it now we keep
it as long as we can if weakness is
tender solicitous kisses I will be the
weakest in the room now that the
present is so endangered we can
stop worrying about the future my
puckering asshole made me a bride
of poetry dirty sheets with our
animal smells the burden and
strength of poetry is in our fractures
like the joy of dodging creditors if
strength is cruelty apathy and
murder I will collapse with another
like me to suffer with flowers they
eventually became afraid of the
thing they created to scare us and
left us alone

CLEAR NOVEMBER MORNING

William Corbett

O Brooklyn's harp, Manhattan's spires
All the liars rough with other's lives,
Jesus sayers, hard moneyed men
Whose hearts are fists of power
Dishonor and death will find you.

THE BRANCHES OF CLOWNS

Michael Earl Craig

The avenging clown sat at the table in his underwear.

Vana Kloun was his stage name.

The avenging clown slumped forward and made a noise into his porridge. It was dark out.

An almost inaudible noise that only the dogs could hear, who slunk to the farthest corners of the room.

The avenging clown had smeared his makeup. Had taken the back of his hand and smeared his makeup.

Emitting a sound only the dogs could hear.

In the park the avenging clown dragged each foot as one might drag a washing machine.

First the one, then the other. Then the one and again the other. This went on all morning, the dogs loose and trailing their leashes, peeing on rocks, chasing squirrels.

At the mall the avenging clown fell down the empty escalator, banging his head really hard a number of times, all the while holding a cup of hot coffee. Adrian, who is an expert on clown behavior, will say this stanza gets a little too slapstick. And so we talk about it. And decide that it doesn't.

At home the avenging clown slumped again at the kitchen table. It was dark out. Besides

avenging clowns you have reductive clowns,
motorcycle-cop clowns and contemplative clowns.
And standard anguished clowns. These are the primary
branches of clowns I'm aware of.

HE EMBLAZONS A T ON THE MOON ON THE BRIEF NIGHT IT IS SUPER

Heather Christle

Because he does not read
he does not know the other moons

the moons you find in books
and the page that is the sky

<i>Cold</i>	<i>Wet</i>	<i>Flower</i>
<i>Blue</i>	<i>Death</i>	<i>Milk</i>
<i>New</i>	<i>Pink</i>	<i>Snow</i>
<i>Red</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Wolf</i>

RAKING, PITTSBURGH

Jim Daniels

November 8, 2016

I'm biking to work, my breath
swirling and disappearing behind me
when I see Tom and Tom sees me.

He is raking leaves. We pretend
not to see each other. We are not
ready to see each other. Raking

leaves over cement, screeching
rake against concrete, bowing
its teeth with pressure.

He's wearing his white Carhartt
overalls. Soon he will be driving
off in his yellow van to drywall

or plaster inside a house
in our fair city in a world
that seems so unfair today

that we cannot look at each
other. We are not violent men.
Yesterday, we stood in line

together and voted. We talked
about our children. We caught up.
He asked about my wife's cancer.

Today I am on my way to teach.
To pretend for eighty minutes that
at least my soul is intact. It is too soon.

It is too late. Tom and I are in
the same boat. Today we cannot
imagine that boat is not sinking.

I am speaking for Tom
because he is busy raking.
I am not sure he really needs

to rake. He appears to be
rounding up leaves that
want to blow away down the street.

We are not good at pretending,
but it's all we've got this morning.
We are not violent men.

But oh, those leaves, today.

WATER HYMN

Kyle Dargan

*The sound/ of water, which is the oldest sound,
the first sound we forgot.*

-Li-Young Lee

A right is a fluid
song no one can fix
or rend unsung. It hums
in the mud of our
marrow, in the muck
of being between
our bones. A right
needs no ink, knows
no publishing credit,
quenches no man
or woman's thirst
for royalties, for votes.
A right is an inherent
tune that has been
real before ballots,
contracts, legal tender,
or the pulp on which
any of those are writ.
Ever-original, a right
is a vestige of the epic,
the wet chorale
we crawled out
the sea singing, what
swelled our chests
before breathing even.

And I swim this, sing this
for myself as much
as I sing it for you—
for the days I amble
past the court
supreme, thinking
this is where I
joined the stream,
became a whole
being. No. I was whole
already. We are all
drenched through
and thoroughly.
For even those who seek
to silence a right
are signing that right
by living—be their
renditions exclusory
or incomplete. For them,
we will open the hymnals
of ourselves—the rights,
the seas we sing. And we
remind them—with lyrics
exhaustive, flooding.
And they will know.

ON A CLEAR NIGHT

Dot Devota

gold-digging the anthem,,,,,linking egos to money we borrowed
returned toothless
with the devil's manicure,,,,,who I famously announce I will not
single out by name,,,,,
if not to save him his lame writing,,,,,from having me
his faulty ideal

or the nuisance he is
a child watching pornography
orchestrating sugar,,,,,dominant sweets
our rationing by enlargement
for what was considered now,,,,, or becoming scarce,,,,,

disenfranchising our swords,,,,,two slippers
needing ambidextrous counseling
equally courting indifference the glass is half of which is the
problem,,,,,
the majority's passion obliterated meat

I'm ageless before my eyes,,,,,feeling the well with a bucket
did not return after I had sent for it the grief....

one truth spared grim sauce
on eve of lioness,,,,,same heavy-hitting notes
snipped with sonar flame
detouring malignancy.....clamped deification

threatened kingdom blackwriting sunk poles
for replicating the wall we were
unable to rest against
monks find meaning,,,,,tics on the moist lungs of recitation
masculine due-diligence the near chance of future!
but belated,,,,,by pre-pubescence
and lewd creation....

the former lives of ostriches to feel less former
hypnotized by bustling streetlife
braid coming loose at my nape
child of older locks,,,,,picked apart,,,,,blackwriting the same five chords
picked out of frustration
in grind against,,,,,exalting ourselves

blackwriting systemic wisdom on laughing gases
the gripe of stars,,,,,livid
for poorly applied illustrations by day had rid color
from their cheeks,,,,,

co-optical,,,,,two revolving lighters
Dawn of Daggers vs Summer Pansies
I was afraid they were warts,,,,,endless variations on a beautiful young
face

UPON THE DEATH OF A REALLY EXCELLENT SINGER

Christopher DeWeese

A voice made song
becomes again
in the bends of a slow *because*.

It comes to me
on the train
beneath the storm

in the now of when it was:
a couple hours ago,
ten years, a month.

The crumpled man
kept saying "I am"
like that was his whole biography.

What is new is
the sky we are in now.
The different sky again.

I keep thinking
now you are only
a song I'm remembering.

I think it is a song
about all of us.

RANT

Diane Di Prima

You cannot write a single line w/out a cosmology
a cosmogony
laid out, before all eyes

there is no part of yourself you can separate out
saying, this is memory, this is sensation
this is the work I care about, this is how I
make a living

it is whole, it is a whole, it always was whole
you do not "make" it so
there is nothing to integrate, you are a presence
you are an appendage of the work, the work stems from
hangs from the heaven you create

every man / every woman carries a firmament inside
& the stars in it are not the stars in the sky

w/out imagination there is no memory
w/out imagination there is no sensation
w/out imagination there is no will, desire

history is a living weapon in yr hand
& you have imagined it, it is thus that you
"find out for yourself"
history is the dream of what can be, it is
the relation between things in a continuum

of imagination
what you find out for yourself is what you select
out of an infinite sea of possibility
no one can inhabit yr world

yet it is not lonely,
the ground of imagination is fearlessness
discourse is video tape of a movie of a shadow play
but the puppets are in yr hand
your counters in a multidimensional chess
which is divination
& strategy

the war that matters is the war against the imagination
all other wars are subsumed in it.

the ultimate famine is the starvation
of the imagination

it is death to be sure, but the undead
seek to inhabit someone else's world

the ultimate claustrophobia is the syllogism
the ultimate claustrophobia is "it all adds up"
nothing adds up & nothing stands in for
anything else

THE ONLY WAR THAT MATTERS IS THE WAR AGAINST
THE IMAGINATION

THE ONLY WAR THAT MATTERS IS THE WAR AGAINST
THE IMAGINATION

THE ONLY WAR THAT MATTERS IS THE WAR AGAINST
THE IMAGINATION

ALL OTHER WARS ARE SUBSUMED IN IT

There is no way out of a spiritual battle
There is no way you can avoid taking sides
There is no way you can not have a poetics
no matter what you do: plumber, baker, teacher

you do it in the consciousness of making
or not making yr world
you have a poetics: you step into the world
like a suit of readymade clothes

or you etch in light
your firmament spills into the shape of your room
the shape of the poem, of yr body, of yr loves

A woman's life / a man's life is an allegory

Dig it

There is no way out of the spiritual battle
the war is the war against the imagination
you can't sign up as a conscientious objector

the war of the worlds hangs here, right now, in the balance
it is a war for this world, to keep it
a vale of soul-making

the taste in all our mouths is the taste of power
and it is bitter as death

bring yr self home to yrself, enter the garden
the guy at the gate w/ the flaming sword is yrself

the war is the war for the human imagination
and no one can fight it but you/ & no one can fight it for you

The imagination is not only holy, it is precise
it is not only fierce, it is practical
men die everyday for the lack of it,
it is vast & elegant

intellectus means "light of the mind"
it is not discourse it is not even language
the inner sun

the polis is constellated around the sun
the fire is central

FROM FINITE CRITERIA

Joseph Donahue

The glorious day
fails; what light is left rises
in shame

*

Ghoulish has-beens
vetted for high office by an
empowered horror

*

How does so much light
come to find itself trapped
inside the sun?

*

The birds seem
devastated; silence
in the thinning vines

*

A victorious
hate-group arrives in
billows of silk

Roof

Timothy Donnelly

We hope for better things. A magnitude, a quantity
that can't be packed with ease like five into a quincunx
pattern on the die or likewise echoed through the tree trunks'

placement in an orchard. Here the branches of an apple
fan like fingers from a hand, its forearm twisting up
through dirt to demonstrate revival, even to the doubter

who pokes at holy wounds to test their authenticity.
We want what we don't know, or what we know of mostly
through a long furnacious rumbling lack of it composes

piecewise into numbers the choir of our never having
had it sings, not so much to give release as to give shape to
what we welcome back in finer form, in robes the color

of a Nile flowing north inside a child's encyclopedia.
When I felt the climbing up at first I meant to swallow it.
Tried to pen it in my lungs. Couldn't think of anyone

ever making sentences equal to the miracle I felt I was
containing. No rinse of recollection of any having heard.
Sank reasonable the urge to tamp that river in me down

on account of its immeasure. We spare no length for
pleasure and know no room for reason when the crowd of us
amasses. These are our circumstances. To not know how

to demonstrate it doesn't mean doesn't exist, a cracked
open pyramid amid the basic grasses of a life. We could be
contented with the cow of it, somehow, but we can't.

We hope for things better. An amplitude, some pressure
counter to the dominant. We build a roof above our head
to limn the need to raise it, an orange compliment paid

to the waves above Detroit, its blue light scattered bluer
by particles no citizen can put a pin in, or an ember against
a gray we stand under knowing what rises from the ashes.

THUS SPAKE THE GUTTER KING TO HIS MINIONS

Karen Donovan

He sold protection, the good kind, whereby
a soul in his keep could entirely
avoid a sudden mugging or at least
know what had hit her, intelligence I
had found difficult to manufacture
all on my own, so I followed his stuff.

: I been out in the sun and in the rain
: Never trust a man with no hind pockets

He drove a cube van lettered on both sides,
Downspout leaks repaired No job too small, rigged
with a tailgate stage on which he would stand,
speaking or singing decasyllabic
unadorned makeshift parables, words hard
to remember right a minute later,
what the wind erased plus mysterious
warning overtures to we who had ears.

: Unfold the past till the whole truth is told
: Homer and single shy of a cycle
: Mow down like buttercups the skyscrapers

The cops dragged him off the street every time,
summoned by worried shopkeepers who then

not so secretly forked over funds to
bail out him and his confiscated truck.

: No stake in the world except for my life
: Piece of cake yonder under a doily
: Which wert and art and evermore shall be

A bit of theater that could have been part
of the act, if it had been just an act.

: Appearing to justify frolicking
: Language makes some Latvians aliens
: The Duke of Windsor had three holes-in-one
: What's a walnetto? A what? Walnetto

Last time I saw him no one was quite sure.

: That siren song of the disenchanted
: The stupid counsel of the worldly
: Beauty but only without repression
: Yes, the world is not a department store
: Be an instigator of reverence

DONALD TRUMP, PRESIDENT, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Kristen Elde

My white toddler son stood pointing a chef's knife at me
and how can I say, as I stood in the kitchen in surprise
terror, a mother fast-mapping how to disarm offspring
with no conscious clue of the power in his hand,
a mother with all the usual failings and myths,
a week after the country elected a man
who stands for violence against women,
for the agency of his own lot only,
what that meant?

PROMPTS

Corwin Ericson

Pass a note through the bars to your new friend in the next cell. In your own words, tell him what you have done. Tell him if there is anything you regret. Who has helped you? Who has been kind to you? The cell block is eager to hear you, their new member. Before we take you to see the doctor, just quickly jot down a few names. We want to make sure your friends and family are safe. Where are they? Write down their addresses so we can add them to our holiday list.

After the Pledge, the Silent Moment, Attendance, Inspection, Announcements, Benediction, Self-Assessment, Full Body Scan, and Patriotic Sing, you smirked during the Safety Instruction. At Detention, a Front-of- Hand-Sub-Garment Pat Down revealed an Unidentified Substance upon Your Person, so you were Physically Directed to a Secure Risk Assessment Zone where Positional Assistance Devices were applied to your extremities. Belly Slaps and Attention Grabs preceded Stress Positioning accompanied by Extended Sensory Destimulation. After a Determination of Failure to Cooperate was obtained by a Qualified Attending Authority, Full Immobilization with Supplementary Culturally Contextual Menacing was employed. To overcome suspected Anticipatory Desensitization Training, Nutrition was applied via Nasal-to-Stomach Esophageal Tubature following a cycle of Expansion and Distention of Organs of Digestion and Elimination with an Approved Amount of Forcefully Introduced Saline Solution and Tissue Irritant. Due to your Exhibition of Listless Response and Insincere Acquiescence, you were Extraordinarily Rendited to an Undisclosed Facility of Comprehensive Persuasion for Further Encouragement. When will people like you learn? Write an essay.

THE ORCHARD NEAR WINTER

Michael Estes

On a road in the country
in a country where a load
of apples has more value
symbolically speaking than

the people who picked it,
the country can't help
but feel fresh. Crisp
in the morning air, the

leaves of the trees lining
the road await the sun. They
were told by someone familiar
with seasons that even now,

when the gourds' orange
shells are pocked by bugs
and frost and the vines that
gave them history are gone,

the sun could rewrite it all
with its rays. The trees' own
apples at their roots rewrite
the air with the scent of becoming

other, the frost bends to receive
a violet a man said he could make
last, and the trees can't wait
for the sun.

MOTHER

Tarfia Faizullah

I woke alone in an ambulance. I had been dreaming of cat-sized blood ants in my blood's other homeland, the women there who undrape wet and green fields from their torsos while the words orphan and widow are whispered. They looked like my mother. It was cold and what used to be my arm ached. Centuries or hours later, I woke alone in a bed not my own. Nails were hammered to cohere my splintered shoulder. Cotton was pushed between my legs to staunch that month's moon-blood. Eventually, I remembered that light can't be brushed from anyone's shoulders. I began to wonder why the ocean inside the drunkard never sleeps, so I left the safe blankness of those walls and hobbled to where the world was free. I sat below a tree. It had fallen asleep inside a child while cannons fired across fields of cotton. The child knew how to salvage the tree's branches into furniture of war, to sand them into planks and hammer them across her windows with unbent rusted nails. It had been a long time since she'd seen the ocean. She was used to drinking smoke. Each time a branch grows back, she told me, I shake. I asked if she knew where my mother was. The child put her hand on my shoulder and touched her saw to my softest place. Eons or seconds later, I found her: my mother: the napping tree in the village inside of me. She woke, and held out her arms. She folded me back into fifths to lay me in my sweet acorn cradle. She wrapped my favorite blanket, a black leaf, around me.

A WEEK AND A DAY

Jessica Fjeld

On Wednesday we looked behind our own eyelids
and realized the game was not Chutes and Ladders

but Snakes and Ladders and the snakes bit
The rules had changed We weren't halfway up anything

we were in the starting gate Thursday
it still smelled of horseflesh

Friday we were surprised by the pink of the sky
having forgotten to plug it in That it would still glow

We turned on the computer and then
threw our babies into the air

Saturday we gave away 0.00001% of our money
and felt better So Sunday we resolved to do it again

but in our grief we dreamed of a political party
that was an actual party beer and warm disagreement

in a house near the top of the hill
and we met each other I mean specifically you and I reader

you made a gesture that looked like the arc of history bending
And it got late so late the day disappeared entirely

I can't say much about the days after that
What would have been Monday was a hole

and Tuesday was a deeper hole
although inside the hole there was a furious dancing

Wednesday was a long slender arm reaching east
with an intent to research which gemstones might

prove useful We I mean specifically you and I reader
sat together staring into the fog picking out of it

like sheep's fleece from a thorny bush bright light
and clean air in tiny shreds and holding it tight in our fists

VESSEL

Leora Fridman

I heard someone
was coming
but I couldn't see.

I heard someone was listening,
but I couldn't hear.

This is the way
I wait:

wait blocked
by my own

white terror,
wait never hearing

an accordion clap,
a shrill songbird,

a prayer that
drops the mic.

We plan to get
to the future

but she
arrives late.

I try to view
this moment
in time.

What saves us
but breathing?

What could
a morning be

when everyone insists
there is tomorrow?

I want
my mind
on you.

THE PROPHET OF NIGHT

Laura M. Furlan

The old man, tskili,
has returned
for a ghostly serenade—
a shrieking really—
from his nightly perch
and I am unnerved
by his presence
in the white birch that
bleeds sap
from its limbs.
The crows protest.

Is he man or witch?
I cannot say.
Perhaps he has come
to steal my soul
or to ask for my hand
in avian marriage.

I'm afraid I am no match
for you, owl-man.
I am made for the light
and the earth
and the living.

APHORISM

Adam Grabowski

11/14/16

after Osip Mandlestam

I've been measuring my days by the days I could have again.
How often I've hit refresh like I could just walk outside.

Lately we've been fighting quietly in the bathroom at night.
Like a bogeyman made up of the untrained hands of many men, lurks.

I pick out the best Frosted Flakes one by one.
My wife cries in the shower.

If I could even have it all back, where would I put it?

He kept arriving red-faced drunk demanding the keys.
We finally yawned and turned off the porch light,

said check under the doormat.
So he did.

When I find my sympathies I think of him golden and unslept,
new to the thought of his government housing.

Holding himself now in a lazy 3am pee, he too wishes
he could have it all back—just the rallies, the applause.

UNIDENTIFIED

Kimiko Hahn

The Pima County morgue is running out of space
as the number of border crossers found dead in the deserts soared during
a heat wave.

"These people are probably not going to be identified," the medical
examiner said.

Investigators sift through belongings for clues—Mexican voter registration
cards,
telephone numbers scrawled on scraps of paper, jewelry, rosaries, family
photographs.

The Pima County morgue is running out of space.

Dr. Bruce Parks unzips a white body bag on a steel gurney and gingerly
examines the few teeth still in their sockets.

"These people are probably not going to be identified," the medical
examiner said.

"We had one gentleman come in as bones, had around his wrist a hospital
bracelet."

Another, though decomposed, was still recognizable. "He's got quite a few
tattoos."

The Pima County morgue is running out of space.

Forced to bring in refrigerated trucks to store the remains of two dozen.

[B]odies brought in during July were dead less than a week.

The Pima County morgue is

Identified—

EVERYTHING, INCLUDING THE BONES

Cathryn Hankla

I'm letting this stale chicken go after saving it
In the freezer for trash day.
I'm dropping my guard, emptying
My hands. I offer you no weapon.
My clean hands are most likely
Cold. My circulation suffers
When I'm crying or afraid.
I have trouble holding it together.
I'm holding out my hand.

Into this Big Blue, a few days ago,
I shoved a lot of walnuts husked in green,
And you know they're heavy as sin
And probably as complicated, maybe
In the end more so than I ever
Dreamed. Don't get me started,
And don't finish me. I've been
Here for a while and you've been
Fooling with me. You even dropped

Stuff into my recycling bin! How could you?
I almost hated you then, but
I found your number, and I called it.
I said, Is this your giant pile of merchandizing
Material? Are these your outdated maps,

Your three 30lb bundles of places to
Find shelter and eat? You said,
Yes, I dumped them.
Well, it's not mine, I

Screamed, Own it! You need to
Come right now and get your shit.
You said, I did a lot of dumping.
Where do you live? If you don't
Pick it up in an hour I'm reporting
You, I said, shaking. Okay,
You said, It won't happen again.
You're an asshole, I didn't say
But you knew what I meant.

I COULD LOVE

Steve Healey

"I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody
and I wouldn't lose any voters. Okay? It's like incredible."

—Donald Trump

I could stand
in the middle of being
quoted as pointing a gun at somebody
in the middle of Fifth Avenue
as saying my feet could stand
in the middle of my skin
and shoot somebody
it could be somebody like you
hearing my description of a bullet
making a hole quoted as
splattering blood across Fifth Avenue
across stopped cars and faces
of shoppers standing in
the middle of my words
and I wouldn't lose
any love as somebody
collapses onto Fifth Avenue
this incredible flower of blood
gushes from the bullet hole
without losing any voters
because this flower is so incredible
this microphone grows my voice
goes off-message into a field
of blood flowers like they're waiting

for incredible raindrops
thirsty for my tears in the middle
of quotes about what I could do
what if I get on my knees
beside somebody dying
on Fifth Avenue I could lie down
in the middle of my skin
and like press my face against
your very dying face and cry tears
and say I'm sorry I love you
so much please stay alive
please don't die
and I wouldn't lose

BROTHER NO ONE

Brian Henry

I am under the shine today.
Today I'm under the shine.
I cannot feel my ear today.
Today I can't feel my ear.

The pills are lined up in front of me.
In front of me are all my pills.
There's no water here to take them with.
There's no water here to drink.

Someone on the other side
is turning and shaking the knob.
Someone on the other side
is kicking and cracking the door.

I am under the gun today.
Today I'm under the gun.
I cannot feel my mouth today.
Today I can't feel my mouth.

My brother is in the room with me.
My brother's name is No One.
My brother is counting trains today.
My brother is naming the trains.

I have nowhere to go today.
Today I have nowhere to go.

I will stay in and sleep today.
Today I will stay here and sleep.

My brother is lying in front of me.
In front of me lies my brother.
I will climb into my body now.
Now I will climb into my body.

My brother will count me to sleep now.
I will be counted into sleep.
My brother will rock us to sleep now.
He will rock our body to sleep.

I am under the shine today.
Today I am under the shine.
My brother's name is No One today.
My brother's name is No One.

THE WORLD, MY FRIENDS, MY ENEMIES, YOU, AND THE EARTH

Nazim Hikmet

I'm wonderfully happy I came into the world,
I love its earth, its light, its struggle, and its bread.
Even though I know its dimensions from pole to pole to the
centimeter,
and while I'm not unaware that it's a mere toy next to the sun,
the world for me is unbelievably big.
I would have liked to go around the world
and see the fish, the fruits, and the stars that I haven't seen.

However,
I made my European trip only in books and pictures,
In all my life I never got one letter
with its blue stamp canceled in Asia.
Me and our corner grocer,
we're both mightily unknown in America.
Nevertheless,
from China to Spain, from the Cape of Good Hope to Alaska,
in every nautical mile, every kilometer, I have friends
and enemies.
Such friends that we haven't met even once—
we can die for the same bread, the same freedom, the same
dream.
And such enemies that they're thirsty for my blood,
I am thirsty for their blood.
My strength
is that I'm not alone in this big world.

The world and its people are no secret in my heart,
no mystery in my science.
Calmly and openly
I took my place
in the great struggle.
And without it,
you and the earth
are not enough for me.
And yet you are astonishingly beautiful,
the earth is warm and beautiful.

translated by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk

A QUIET AFTERNOON AT THE OFFICE

Brenda Hillman

When you're overwhelmed at your job
 & the room is a field of consciousness,
 forming first the violet edges
 & later the pierced spiral
 of what just happened,
you try to remember events while you
stumble over twigs of the day like a red bee.
 So much anger in the economy
 after too much not enough—
people setting tents in the streets,
 the last of the fruit gives way
on branches you see as you work
 holding the annihilated breath.

Now that the crisis has no locale
 there's a sense of the lively unit
 into which they had placed feeling:
 fatigue & theory, cornice & cup,
links of your spine on the chair...
 what will they do, will they do, will they do
 when labor rebels but not quickly?
It was so much work to cohere—
 a radical hope fills in: revolt
 in the square, thin crows,
 fat capital, the ash, the lists,
the fire you'd been harvesting, for this—

for MM

NOVEMBER 9, 2016

Lauren Hunter

america after the fall but it isn't over i just wanna wash my hands of it
i'm guilty all the time of being silent in the fight
because i've kept myself where i feel people can reasonably assume things
about my intentions
but also
i am in hiding. i am hiding from you america, and from you, white men,
and from
anyone who isn't actively looking for me

i don't feel safe, ever, anywhere, entirely
and i've gotten used to that feeling. where i worry
about my apparent ambivalence but i am scared
to sit in or stand up and be counted
i have been counting on my invisibility to see me through
because i am afraid of you
i am afraid of what you'll do to me
and what you'll say about me
and what will be left of me when i lose

what i don't admit is that i know you hate me america
i've known it for a long time
and i see it over and over
and i know
i know
what i've gotta do is love in the face of you
i've gotta love me in your face
but i'm only half there. i only love me enough

when i've got you on mute. i can only be strong when
i'm surrounded with agreement—bold in the face of yes.

what i don't admit is that i know you hate me america
and i do too
or rather, love me a little less
and i can't demand better of you because i don't expect better
and you've taught me so often not to
so while my braver friends are gearing up for the fight i am ready to hurt
myself into silence
back where you told me i belong
and i won't make a fuss or much of a mess
and you won't notice because you never did

but i am aching america
i am bleeding and breaking and tearing myself apart
and i am dying this morning. maybe you never believed in me because i
never did.
maybe i didn't because you never did. maybe we all hobble out a little
wounded now.

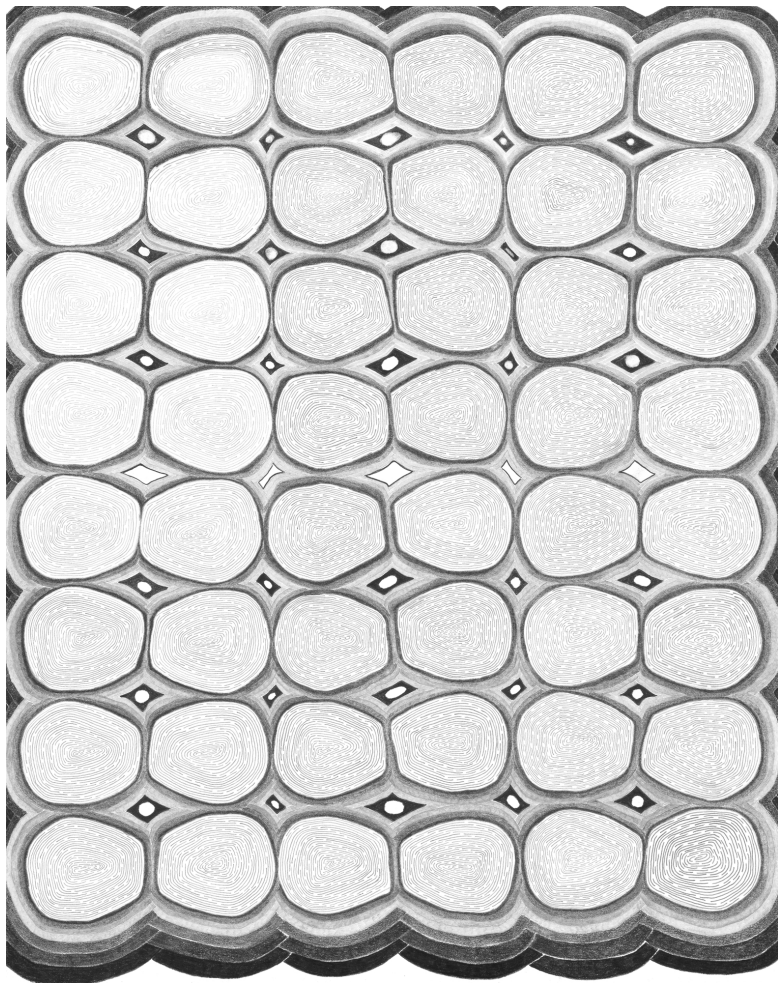
WHEN BIRDS COLLIDE

Julia Johnson

We're circling the light
until we die from exhaustion.
However little we define
ourselves as birds, the hawk-like
waiting we do in our sleep,
or the greedy picking into
a cage for sunflower seeds,
we can never find enough
light and so we look for it—
in the new slant reflected
on a clear drinking glass,
on surface water, from a pleated lampshade,
or in the fading of dusk—
How can light glistening
from an eye be forgotten
in an instant? But held forever
in the shine of a dime?
Polluting photons are killing
plants and birds.
I'm thinking I should take now
to the dark stairs in my nightgown,
and from the brightly lit foyer,
turn out the porch light, its yellow
glow a constant on the freshly painted
gray porch floor.

HEADSTONES

Kathranne Knight



THE NEW WORKSHOP

Brian Laidlaw

1.

Workshops are places objects are assembled, things like gifts, guns & caskets.

You might nick your hand there & see a feed of blood come out of the knuckle,

you might-should wear safety goggles & a lead vest because the new workshop
allows stories only rarely & poems even rarer.

At the end of each line you might-should ask, *Am I nearly dying, Am I nearly dead or dead*

& then, *Is someone else nearly dying or dead*, & lastly are these phenomena related?

They always are.

2.

The new workshop hurts feelings like mine, but not the way assassinations of journalists hurt
or the way chokeholds hurt; even if your story isn't ready you can't opt out.

The enterprise is horrific, there's no red pen striking weak lines in the new workshop,
there's the red-light, redline ambulance, the shattered window & the throng

of cameramen, the tendrils of flame, a wick, a newsfeed.

3.

After every piece shown in the new workshop people shake their heads &
shame each other
for picking death by flame-retardant-asbestos-borne bone cancer

over death by fire. After every line you ask, *Is this a litter for a soldier on a
cot*
or, *Is this a jobless vet's sign*, lifting a dead or dying person up off the gutter
brick

& the answer is almost always *no*, the paper is too thin, the paper isn't a
litter, it's just *litter*,
you are asked by a panel of peers to crumple it up & stop congratulating
yourself.

The new workshop is hurtful, but it is infinitely less hurtful than the
world.

4.

You are correct to hate self-annulling poems & self-effacing stories,
that time is better spent getting shot for your beliefs. The old workshop
was a hangar for the manufacture not of *beliefs* but of *belief-hangars*, of
thought-rain
that evaporates before it waters the drought-hot ground.

The war you're fighting can't be won with paper airplanes, not even a
million
reams-worth of them. The new workshop shames environmental poets
whose work appears

in wasteful print magazines, just like it shames punk bands with ad-space.

5.

The new workshop is for building literature as useful as cabinets &
outhouses.

Think of the carpenter who has dozens of different saws each with a
different purpose,

countless hardnesses of hammer. What the hell is in our workshop, a
workshop
is where things change or where *nothing* becomes *something*, not where
nothing changes.

At the end of every line you ask, *Is this still a poem*, and then, *Are people
still starving?*

The new workshop is a terrifying place with sharp tools in it,

& no writers, only humans.

6.

The new workshop is a terrifying place for your memoir about suburbia,
for your poem
about whale-watching & the blow-spout spray

because elsewhere a heart is pumping out blood, & gunmen are in the
offices.

I need a new workshop to workshop this poem, teach it how to matter
or put a bullet in its head.

OBLIGATIONS ARE PRIVILEGES

Seth Landman

Found myself in the rain
thinking we could be spectacular
I remember I really let my guard down
writing the first line alling in love in the winter
through a cold cloud
keeping all of us together
something horrible keeps happening
and you and I are implicated
thinking about the evil in the world
spoiled my other thoughts
sometimes I don't know what I am made of
but I can't sleep so I know I'm here
I stayed my mind
felt solemn and moved
obligations are privileges
for you are alive
and know how to be holy
and when you can't sleep
how to write in the dark

HISTORY LESSON BEGINNING WITH A FRAGMENT FROM AESCHYLUS

Nick Lantz

*the eagle, struck
by an arrow,
looks down
& recognizes
its own feathers
fletching the shaft*

Agamemnon killed his daughter
for a fair wind. For a wall. For a better
deal. Because a priest told him to.
To make his country great again.
For this, Clytemnestra, his wife,
killed Agamemnon, & for that,
their son, Orestes, killed her back.
Remember, now, that Clytemnestra
was the daughter of Leda, raped
by a swan. Her sister, Helen, we blame
for launching all those Greek ships
that needed the wind for which
Agamemnon killed his daughter,
for which Clytemnestra killed
her husband & oh yes (don't forget)
also Cassandra, the concubine
he took from Troy. Poor Cassandra,
who killed no one, but who was raped

in the Temple of Athena, an act
for which Athena cursed the Greeks,
who she'd sent to Troy in the first place.
But before even that, it was Apollo
who forced himself on Cassandra
(another temple, another rape),
& when she refused, he cursed her
to see the future but never to be
believed, & so Cassandra knew it all
beforehand (the ships, Ajax's breath
on her neck on the temple floor,
the knife in Clytemnestra's hand),
but when she warned the Trojans
what was waiting at their gates
they locked her in a prison.

Oh, & what happened to Orestes,
who killed his mother, who'd killed
his father, who'd killed his sister?
He got off at trial, & the Furies
who wanted nothing but to tear
his flesh had to sit on their claws,
tamed now to the rule of law, to the will
of the people (the same people who,
on Aeschylus' epitaph, recorded
his military deeds & never mentioned
his tragedies), & if it seems unclear

which side I'm asking you to choose—
the bloodless law or the bloody Furies—
it's only because I can't choose,
& anyway neither side ever cared
much about Cassandra or Leda
or Iphigenia (that was the name
of the daughter Agamemnon killed),
only the glory of the civilization
those great men made on their bloody
islands amid that wine-dark sea.

THE NEW COLOSSUS

Emma Lazarus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

AMERICAN DREAM

Kelly Le Fave

As a child, I watched so many houses
like so many tombstones
pass by the car window, day after day;
front door and lawn after front door and lawn,
porch after porch and roof after roof
whizzed through my vision.
Please don't make me live in one of those,
I prayed deep inside my heart.

Before that, tethered to my umbilicus,
I sniffed in some far off place
a great task to behold.
I could not see it clearly,
but it brushed up against the soles of my feet
and pressed in behind my ears.
Good lord, I prayed.
Good lord.

Once I stood in church. I was probably seven.
The whole space started to spin
and my blood plunged all at once
down to my belly.
I crouched into my knees.
All around me they wondered aloud
what I had eaten for breakfast.

One day it came to me:

I am not a ruler.

I am not a doormat.

*I have so little to say
that matters.*

I am alive.

I am alive.

I am alive.

I put my right foot forward.

I pry my left foot from the floor where it is pinned.

Between earth and heaven

I pour out my prayer:

Gently lead me, my heart.

Gently break me open.

ANOTHER ANOTHER

Lesle Lewis

The goodness has collapsed and gone.

It's the same "now" for everyone.

We are at oneness at oneness.

We are a long march of people and resources, waves and sheep, a march of demonstratives.

We eat candy and irony.

Deerhunters roam the woods and bad people are in power.

Good people are digging up reasons not to seek substance-fueled escapes, happier imaginations.

They are walking with their bundles away from the core of the hearts of their enemies.

Their bundles are made of children and cats and dogs and earth and cows and chickens and tigers and elephants and giraffes and sloths and orangutans and alligators and lobsters and spiders and trout and chickadees.

Their bundles are made of what they are without and also the bundles of the others and the others themselves.

One person walks one way, another another.

The goal is not to diminish the random and crazy, but to look at it.

One person looks one way, another another.

One person thinks up an experiment of entangled particles under the superluminal.

One person simplifies but they limit and deny by simplification, and also by the milk and eggs.

They generalize and share the weather.

Enter the wolf, the toothpick, the bee, the glass, the staircase.

Enter the elite and the ordinary and the back-to-bedders.

Enter the up close paper rip and leaping sparks.
One person reads what one writer writes about another writer writing
about the unfit leader.
Enter the superpowers and siblings, the notes to self and accidents.
Meanwhile, until the big hand is on the nine, polarities are stretched
farther and no amount of force on one side can break the other.
One person breathes one way, another another.
The people keep their heads down and walk slowly until they are dead and
don't carry anything.
Just say "basket" or "no basket," and there's the basket.

TALK TALK

These are the odds: the roar of a falls or the hole of a mouth.
These are the results of a combination of factors largely outside of our
control.
They come crashing down or they light us up.
Human plights, free love and free food, driverless cars, the rich and the
poor, and our final days are side-by-side.
How do we sleep with it?
When will it be okay to be okay again and will it?
We can't will our wills.
Out the window we look at every morning November's hunters' guns,
chainsaws, and terrible terrible news.
The women cook circles and with their dogs protest.
It's not the cow herself, but her upside down reflection that is also
protesting I'm sure.
This worst thing will serve as background from now on for every decision
and the demise of the human will be quiet as an eye blink.
We don't have time to tour the gardens.
Like seeds years latent, the evil has superbloomed.
We will shoot him with an arrow and he will die quickly as he is supposed
to do and his body will be swept away easily into nothing.

GAPS IN THE FENCE

Kate Lindroos

I found the animals roaming on the same hill
where I left them

becoming frustrated
by my lack of proficiency

in leading and containing them.
These tasks seemed too distinct

to accomplish at the same time,
each one requiring a whole mind.

I knew they were my animals
because they made me anxious

in all the familiar ways.
I felt the need to love them

though there was no love in me at the moment,
only the feeling of needing to feel so, and I wished then

to lie down with them for a while to see
if they would accept me in solitude or if

I would accept myself in that same solitude
among them and if in that way

like I had promised I could learn then
how finally to keep track of their roaming.

FLORIDA

Paul Lisicky

as the votes were being counted for florida I thought
well at least yours won't be numbered among them
and as the votes went over the top I knew
this was going to feel a lot like the days
after your death last year
though it will last much longer
and the gumwood might not ever come back next spring
not to mention the everglades
and the manatee who swam up to cape cod
it reminds me all over again
you could love me
say you love me
say when my marriage ended
it was real
and still pull the hook in that booth again and again
i want to pull you close
even as i want to push your back up against the wall
always this space this fucking
space
between
us
always skin and sex
and the fear they'll be taken away
we want someone out there to touch us
in our soul
in the places
all of us are afraid to talk about

to remind us we are animals
who know better than we know that their bodies are something to lose
every moment they stand out in the sunlight

FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT

Eric Lorberer

Remember going blind? Remember killing
whales off the coast of Cape Cod?
I drove around Kansas looking for Kryptonite
but all I saw was wheat.
It was the rainy season and everyone was wearing
bright slickers, and waving their scythes
like synchronized swimmers
executing a new move.
In Daytona Beach I got married
and my new wife
was a former serial killer, what are the odds?
I moved into a Georgian flophouse
where the woman down the hall
wept nightly listening to her dead father—
his voice was like the sea
erasing itself, slow and steady,
until it was a bag of wet cement.
I kept on, I took communion in Texas,
I made blue movies in Mississippi,
I told fortunes on the outskirts of
Pair-A-Dice, Montana.
And one day while stopped
at a traffic light in New York City,
I saw Niels Bohr in a trench coat
tearing important documents into confetti.
When our eyes met, his mouth trembled
as if he were about to confess a crime,

but then his jugular burst open,
and he could obviously no longer speak.
The light turned green.
And when I looked down at my feet
I saw your face, Mr. President-Elect,
on the gas pedal.

SUDDENLY WE FIND OURSELVES SURROUNDED ENTIRELY

Julia Madsen

in the roundness of being, like a walnut in its shell. Images of roundness help us collect ourselves, their archive confers hope. Let us begin with hope. It is the shell enveloping a seed, shelter in the burning desert wind of the real I go to. The wind a vibrating torch or parchment of ether aflame (knowing that place is absence's domain). Domicile is abode by another name, and still sweet. If we begin to awaken our instincts. Slowly. If one starts to roll a marble between their fingers, gathering heat. We burn what we cannot keep, heap pile after pile onto a bed of matchsticks. We seep through our shelter feverfold and raw until dawn comes damasking hot pink gradients, solar flares.

I wanted to speak to you as if from a bubble. Underwater. Garbled. That the words might never be known. By this I mean: I could find no other way. Speech bubbles appear floating above heads as detached translations of what one really meant to say. But you've become immune to this mode of transit, metaphors passing each other or floating just out of reach. It's gravity that concerns me. The weight of images under eyelids. Do they stick or flutter. Can they speak.

Let a word call out to its thing. Bubble. Marble. Matchstick. The round cry of being makes the sky round like a cupola. And in this landscape. Let a word call out to the space around it. What bubble might

float within
its liquid glass
mirror in order to
evaporate

let surface
call to another
to look with fresh eyes
at the calm the word
round breath

Call to more and more words. Words like metallic shells pellet the atmosphere. But weightless, oh. This pin on my lapel, affixed to the heart, fixing it. In a daydream beneath a lone tree at the center of a world, I consider the physical weight of the word. Consider the word. A bubble. Of endless births. Consider the weight of enclosure. The O of the mouth, breath fogging glass. Does this arrangement offer syntax. Can I fit a ball of a fist into my mouth. Can I suck back in glass. All these surfaces attempt to cling to one another.

Turbulent waters, I can hear you.

I can hear the perfect spheres falling from the tree in a loop of music. The spheres float just above my head in a daydream a delphinium daze wherein I find myself back under the lone tree at the center of a world. Tall grasses brush the wind. I lay down again. Again and again I lay down. This is the utopic afterfold, a glimmer of late afternoon under the rural Midwestern

sun. Half-light illuminating the edges of everything. Apples in a red wheelbarrow. This is the prairie that walked away.

This is not a compensation for walking away. But I can hear them say that they are safe in their bubble, the bubble into which I was born, a field of a shelter. And I can hear that we are not safe. We are not safe and I have seen the people I grew up with walk away from others, I have seen them walk away from minorities and women and I am no child there is no utopic afterfold there's only dirt and empty space breathing at us. I will not lie down in the dirt for what you refuse to see. Can you hear me. Can you see me breathing. I'm not stopping until you listen and even then. It's true that all bubbles live toward. An auratic and fluid universe. Bursting.

*Parts of this poem are inspired by or incorporate fragments from Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* and Peter Sloterdijk's *Bubbles*.

FROM THE VORONEZH NOTEBOOKS

Osip Mandelstam

We're still completely, totally alive;
They all still stroll the Union's city streets
Decked out in shirts and fancy shifts
Of Chinese cloth with moths and leaves.

And still the number one machine
Abruptly collects the chestnut bribes,
And spills them—tresses at once
Thick and wise—on clean white sheets.

There's still enough of swallows and of swifts,
The comet's not yet made us lose our minds,
But draws, with its pragmatic, purple ink,
The form of stars and comet tails.

May 25, 1935

translated by Andrew Davis

LEAVING EARTH

Adrian Matejka

After all of the foul-gravitied abstentions
 & static lead ins of Earthly atmosphere,

the moon is the same shape as an LP,
 which is shaped the same as the luminous

afro framing some future astronaut's face
 like an arpeggio of stars would if stars

were hollowed out like the half notes
 ascending from Earth's rough creeks

& busted-up trees—& the little girl running
 through them in a quick split of wobbly

sunlight & the vanity in red birds flocking
 skyward like a chorus of singing mouths—

instead of a balled-up sun halving itself
 on the left side of Voyager 2 as it makes

its ungainly way from here to whatever
 waits after the needy bigotry & friction

of this place. We all move up like that—
 thin thermometers, demagogues with red

faces & hands full of slim denials, black
astronauts listening to Mozart & his gyres

of birds while a daughter reaches up through
the gauze to kiss her mother below a red

& orange arabesque of leaves. All of us,
lathed on the gold record spinning inside

Voyager 2 when it finally makes its way
out of our high-styling heliosphere,

antennae blinking as sharply as a needle
in the lead out of the recordable world.

FROM MY UTMOST DEVOTION

Andrew McAlpine

after hours in the wilderness
I have returned to my hometown
where my friends have seeded
their individual forests

I have peered into their windows
trying to catch a glimpse
of the overarching forehead
governing us all

the landscape is heaving
with the retreating army's booby traps
competing dreams jockeying
for the attentions of the sleeper

I have the feeling we are being set against
each other's best wishes
this is the year of silence
when our correspondence is gathered

on a barge & sailed off
the edge of the globe
that your thoughts are yours & not mine
is the greatest tragedy

if my thoughts could grab yours
your horror would be total

the only communication I desire
is the wink in the dark

I get you, dude
I really do
I want to take your hand
& place it on the handle

of a shopping cart
everything the light touches
is your impending kingdom
for your sake, I hope it comes soon

FROM SONNETS. PART I: XIII

Shane McCrae

As when, down some broad River dropping, we,
Day after day, behold the assuming shores
Sink and grow dim, as the great Water-course
Pushes his banks apart and seeks the sea:
Benches of pines, high shelf and balcony,
To flats of willow and low sycamores
Subsiding, till, where'er the wave we see,
Himself is his horizon utterly:
So fades the portion of our early world.
Still on the ambit hangs the purple air;
Yet, while we lean to read the secret there,
The stream that by green shore-sides plashed and purled
Expands; the mountains melt to vapors rare,
And life alone circles out flat and bare.

FROM SONNETS. PART II: XVIII

And Change, with hurried hand, has swept these scenes:
The woods have fallen; across the meadow-lot
The hunter's trail and trap-path is forgot;
And fire has drunk the swamps of evergreens!
Yet for a moment let my fancy plant
These autumn hills again,—the wild dove's haunt,
The wild deer's walk. In golden umbrage shut,
The Indian river runs, Quonecktacut!
Here, but a lifetime back, where falls to-night
Behind the curtained pane a sheltered light
On buds of rose, or vase of violet
Aloft upon the marble mantel set,—
Here, in the forest-heart, hung blackening

NOT LOOKING UP

Frances McCue

All the poems ended before this time
When poems must come, past the poem time
Of making. And how making seems small,
The stitching of things that will bring beauty,
Human things made
In the small time.

My young friends, if we stood at our windows
and watched fear open to the street
If we wanted to fix the broken things that
Will now be taken away,
We would see the old Masters, the ones who
Wrote of fascism and genocide.

What is our work now? To gather,
to lift our faces from our phones.
To look up. To ask: what is the sky to us,
what is our sun to us?
What is our rising sea level to us? What of the people
Who came from other countries, came to us for refuge
And work? What of them?

America, lift your faces from your phones.
Take no consolation in what you find there.
Do you see the sky? Do you walk in the forest?
Do you see the places taken to their splinters?
The friends who are fearful?

Lift your faces.

The world is upon you. Upon you with Immigration

Officers and clinics that turn people away.

Look for the soup kitchens. Look for gates, for golf courses.

We sold out to angry people.

And we feared they wouldn't come

Until the makings formed endings

In the O of our shouts.

[UNTITLED]

Michael Medeiros

I have overkicked dandelions
on a damp Tuesday morning
until my Doc Martins were enveloped in
fluff and seed.
I am spreading this species so that
lawns will no longer be green next summer
but a yellow that no weed killer can contain.
We will sweep out soft and heavy,
a velour-wrapped yellow brick road,
I with the germ of future subversion
on my toes,
marching until tame suburban
colonializing dreams of order, monoculture
and serenity sink under a puffball-spread veldt.
I will dandelion-blanket the world beginning with
a boot's worth of insurgence,
I will toe the wish on every miracle seedling
drifting in the fall air,
I will take those wishes
and hurl them at the ground,
and I will tend those wishes until
they sprout,
because all I wish this time
around is bloom,
and dandelions know
what to do once
set loose.

AMERICAN

Eddie Meidav

Sister once of one branch teetering on
nothing, the stories you tell now
deep in the skin of what others never
forget, bright from your making memories
immortalized by instant shots

Sister you never got what
you needed, shy to give and lose

Once of nothing

If you were a red fox

I would not eat you for dinner

If we were a shipwreck

I would help us find the island

we could name

Now the body that was our first home falters
we cannot dance around the clock
it ticks for both of us

POEM ENTERING THE APPLE VALLEY TARGET

Lynn Melnick

Into the fluorescent rough country
headlong into bulks of flesh

impatient to outspend me

and who wouldn't fold real quick
under the weight of America's sales and specials.

I believed then I didn't

that I was different than I am
in my own skin in this infinity

mirror, instructed such
to seduce myself, to go on.

I am sorry

about the space I take up
about the panic

running around my aspect and my hunger

although it's nothing

these racks of acrylic winter apparatus
won't dazzle out of my head.

I'll take several. I'll take fistfuls.

I'll tuck it into my mouth at night to keep me quiet.

MISGIVINGS

Herman Melville

When ocean-clouds over inland hills
Sweep storming in late autumn brown,
And horror the sodden valley fills,
And the spire falls crashing in the town,
I muse upon my country's ills—
The tempest bursting from the waste of Time
On the world's fairest hope linked with man's foulest crime.

Nature's dark side is heeded now—
(Ah! optimist-cheer disheartened flown)—
A child may read the moody brow
Of yon black mountain lone.
With shouts the torrents down the gorges go,
And storms are formed behind the storm we feel:
The hemlock shakes in the rafter; the oak in the driving keel.

TABOO

Christopher Merrill

What was next? The soldiers were restless, and the scribes assigned to them could not wait for their tour to end. But no one at the working dinner noticed that a provision slipped into the cease-fire agreement, by a mapmaker from the geological survey team, guaranteed its failure; the toasts went on and on, negotiators from both sides praised the phrasing of the final communiqué, and who could blame them if they mistook the distant rumble of artillery for thunder? Rain was what the country needed after so much carnage, to say nothing of the long years of drought, and they hailed the sound that spelled their end with clear consciences. *Hear, hear!*

The tower that was not a tower, on the mountain that was not a mountain, in the land that was not off-limits to storytellers from beyond the sea: this was how they explained why there was little chance of discovering what had happened to the codex in which the rights and obligations of the citizenry were spelled out in more detail than anyone would ever believe. But in the tower was a sentry reading by candlelight an unconvincing history of the rise of pamphleteering and its role in fomenting revolution. He never saw the ships bearing down on the coast.

The manifesto made no mention of the siege, the subject of the symposium, and the moderator's promise to have the papers published in a dozen languages hardly appeased the delegates. For one thing, they didn't trust the translators to convey the music of their phrasing; for another, they didn't think the embassies would distribute the texts without adding diplomatic notes certain to draw more fire from the army occupying the mountains surrounding the city.

She wouldn't talk about it; and so he began to take pleasure in marking the progress of the blight killing the white oak beyond the fence—branches that didn't leaf out, limbs falling to the ground. One spring evening, when the wind died and there was nothing more to say, he climbed the tree to watch the sun set over the river. There was truly nothing more to say.

HOMELAND

Philip Metres

A black carpenter ant clambered up the bathroom wall. If there was one, then more would come. Between my thumb and finger, even inside the tissue, I felt its body writhe, flinging limbs.

It had to be done. I couldn't crush it, its abdomen and thorax like tiny grapes, so tossed the little infiltrator into the toilet. Beneath the surface, the paper slowly unfolded like a white flower, revealing the unmoving ant.

As if stunned into some watery dream, the ant began to crawl down the blooming paper. Not finding air, it stopped its downward path, churned its legs in a fury, twisting its segmented body like a whip, rising on its own flagellation.

I stood above the toilet, observing, and observing myself observing it—half in admiration of its will to find a pocket of air, half in horror at my own fascination with its struggle.

Once, in unnameable pain, it was as if someone were watching me, thrallled, squeezing me between fingers. In this flame of flesh, lit with hurt, I awoke at the bottom of some ocean.

Not drowning, but flailing up.

[UNTITLED]

Albert Mobilio

In the United States there is more space where nobody is than
where anybody is. This is what makes America what it is.

—Gertrude Stein, *A Geographical History of America*

Nobody is America

This is where there is more than what is

The space makes anybody united

What is this space

Where is this America

What makes anybody more than nobody

What united is—more states where is is

This makes the where more than space

More anybody space than America space

ON THE OCCASION OF THE SECOND WEEK IN NOVEMBER

Anthony Moll

The asphalt throbs a coldsong back to the marchers

autumnal decisions breed autumnal moods.

A vagabond asks the ash's plastids for a fall

Lord, litter us back to some unearned nostalgia.

The frost advisory whispers, *the end of the world*

looks pretty

much the same

as its center –

ire and unknown.

CROSS-OVER SONNETS

Lucy Moran

CROSS-OVER SONNET I.

- 1.A. *Prose sonnet, dedicated to Greg, my freed freedom writing brother, RIP*
2.B. A we poem, we writer and reader, or we speakers and listeners peoples,
3.C. a poem set in time and in space, or untimed and un-
4.D. spaced,
5.E. or post election, too late, time, and grief space, labyrinthian space, place to start,
6.F. perhaps, no place to end,
7.G. returning through the rubble of prescribed stepping stones to the starting
8.H. space place again;
9.I. Partnering dirge songs of us, ourselves, & we with grassroots graffiti you, yourselves, & you,
10.J. un-storied chapters, un-scriptured verses, bounded, bordered, framed, or not,
11.K. by letters, phonemes, parts of speech, grammars,
12.L. meant to be for you all or just one of you, and now for no one left
13.M. to take away, go off into a new time with a new space inside meant to be opened up
14.N. for this poem to reside but instead swells shut with grief lined groans.

CROSS-OVER SONNET II.

1.A. *Grief sonnet, dedicated to Barack and Michele Obama, IWMY*

2.O. Dark swarthy sun-burned lady, lovely Solomon lover,

3.P. more-delightful-than-wine public presence blessing,

4.Q. lady from a line worth thousands of priestly-penned pages over centuries,

5.R. presenting with grace and class, stature and style,

6.S. flower of Sharon, lily among thorns of the valley,

7.T. peeled petal, loved sometimes but often and mostly loved-not,

8.U. joy-drawn upward and outward gazing eyes;

9.V. with your gentle man-lover, sachet of myrrh, cluster of henna,

10.W. woods-placed refreshing apple tree among lesser trees,

11.X. springing leaping gazelle-like, mountain-framed, hill bound,

12.Y. healing-bound, dignity, integrity, and brilliance bound:

13.Z. you, my soon-no-longer President and First Lady, forced to yield

14.N. seats of honor to thorns and lesser trees. I take my knee.

CROSS-OVER SONNET III.

- 1.A. *Letter sonnet from Santa to adult children wishing for lovely icy fudge, CMF*
2.O. Dear Andre, Benita, Carlos, Donali, and Edwina, did you know
3.C. Scripted yellow finger paint becomes pinky mist as shades of red get added?
4.Q. That spotlights and flashlights make all monsters disappear?
5.E. Do you wonder sometimes, how deep does color have to go, and grow?
6.S. Or, how often will you hear again the deadly tapping of the cane?
7.G. Or feel ice in the lungs or sun in the palpitating eye,
8.U. musically marked frying of light, freezing, seeing the crowd?
9.I. Were you surprised by the redial swinging violent until kicking, returning,
10.W. and the cane in the backstage space and place, joining the crew crowd
11.K. then afterwards, the now, the heating up, burning up, frying up, spattering,
12.Y. seeking sensations so unsavory, the unsavory opposite of unselfish love?
13.M. Down here, where you keep waiting, for that never new time, space to open up,
14.N. where the question(s) all good poems ask reside(s): could you use some fudge?

STONE IS STONE

Blueberry Morningsnow and Aleta Lanier

Proto-vision 3

May 24, 2016



echo of an overrated fish falling down the sea
a person I love, who you know, who used to be my friend
dusk, shame, the everybody thread: bloomers and feelers
“I know what my fucking soul is” —fist of mist—
the thread gives you back who you are, a landscape,
spiral spell, a circle that moves darkly on itself, fresh
in the wild wide, obliterated, flecked with gold
songs of love in the rock faces hang
the soul is everything, turning silent

ALL OF IT

Alicia Mountain

Lips licked wet enough to whisper

we saw a bald eagle here once, remember.

LACTORIUM

Laura Mullen

And your heartlessness and your longing for lies are like milk to me
And your self-harm and your scapegoating are like milk to me like your
rage and

Your unwillingness to pay taxes your desire to buy cheap things these are
like milk

And your dirty wars and your drones are like milk to me
Because the words “collateral damage” and “byproduct” are so white
And your anxiety and your depression and your plastic and your failure to
recognize

The guilty above a certain level of influence are all so thick and creamy
And your tolerance for violent injustice I drink this I drink this thickness
And your active shooter is like white milk to me and your racism is a kind
of milk

And the killing of children is like milk to me the body left on the street is
like milk

And your sexism is like milk to me your rape culture
And your protection of the abuser who is white and male is exactly like
milk to me

And your adoration of the richest and most powerful is like milk to me
And the years when you fail to work on a cure for the disease because you
despise

The afflicted those long decades are like milk to me
And your guns are like milk to me your precious guns more precious than
anything

And the blood of the dead is like mother’s milk to me this spilling
Whiteness the names of the dead and the grieving I go on swallowing
And your protection of corporate interests and banks is like milk to me

And your privatized racist prison system is like milk to me
And your inadequate healthcare system is like milk to me
And your underfunded educational system failing that's just like milk to
me
And the pale word "addicted" erases everything
And justice has a white bandage poured over her gouged-out eyes
And the word "undocumented" is full of vitamin D
And your air force and navy are like milk all the whiteness you pour into
"Trouble spots" for "stability" spilling out spreading out blanking out
And the tears of those sleeping on cardboard and rags under the overpass
salty milk
Because the word "homeless" is like the word milk I drink it and drink it
it's like
Drinking sunlight it builds strong bones and teeth and teeth
And the phrase "can't hold down a job" is like milk to me
And your bullying your shaming every way you hurt the spirit is like milk
to me
And your worship of the facist your support of the dictator is cold is like
cold milk
And student debt and catastrophically failing infrastructure
And your love of the lies of the would-be legislator these are just like milk
to me
And your prescriptions for painkillers the refills the new prescriptions and
medications to help you shit and to help you stop shitting and the anti-
anxiety pills
and the anti-depressants that stopped working and the new anti-
depressants that

might be working or might not be working and every pharmaceutical
company
lobbying doctors to prescribe more painkillers white white
White and your logging and mining and fracking and drilling and every
place ruined
Forever is now that it's ruined forever and uninhabitable just like milk to
me
And the end of languages cultures species knowledges ways of living is like
milk
And your contempt and self-pity and fear are also like milk to me
And all the lives shrunk deformed by your lies and imaginary needs are
like milk to
me I drink and I'm drinking I choke and go on it's endless this white on
white on
white on white flag unfurling to drip from the edge of nothing into
nothing forever
stinking of methane

SEA GLASS

Alicia Rebecca Myers

for M

If you're worn down enough
you cloud the fight. There
was an episode – an episode – when –
100 years ago people were
eating things that most of us will never taste.
A falling off from another
predecessor carrot.

How can she stand
to smooth the error?
Beachcombers roll in for the season.
Elsewhere the season turns
cold, colder –
it shouldn't have to be all
snow swarming like mosquitoes in
headlights. The fur tops ride out underneath
the plantings, this is – what now – what – a cursed ship
or a shipped curse.
Mourn the empty space
the wrong talk fills.
Whale-ache made meet-cute.

CRISIS IN FAIRFAX

Travis Nichols

Thought has turned
our tongues to sand,
my memories,
useless,
yours,
worse,
static
as a sack
of pulverized quartz.
It is impossible
to make
a decision.
We must trust
the instruments.
We have to excavate
every delicate
presence.
If I cry
into the cavity,
if we end up
on
the other side
in some strange
custody,
act
plausible,
push me in and walk away,

but keep
the code
on the back
of your neck.

Not there,
higher,
where my mouth
is,
or will
be
if matter dissolves
only
to be made whole
again.

PRAYER BEFORE ACTIVISM

We would not affect those

who are averse

to

preaching.

Let us employ

the means

appropriate to

the cause

but keep our faith

in the world.

FROM OF BEING NUMEROUS

George Oppen

12

'In these explanations it is presumed that an experiencing subject is one
occasion of a sensitive reaction to an actual world.'

the rain falls

that had not been falling

and it is the same world

...

They made small objects

Of wood and the bones of fish

And of stone. They talked,

Families talked,

They gathered in council

And spoke, carrying objects.

They were credulous,

Their things shone in the forest.

They were patient

With the world.

This will never return, never,

Unless having reached their limits

They will begin over, that is,

Over and over

TOMORROWS

Joe Pan

Today is not today, because it is still
yesterday. & yesterday was the day
before yesterday, & the day before that.
There will never be a new day so long
as we live in this, our long yesterday.
They did not take another black life
today, because this is no new day,
it's still yesterday. & the yesterday
we live in has been a long, long day.
People talk about tomorrow as if
they'd ever lived in a tomorrow
but no one has lived in a tomorrow,
we just have today, which is not
today, but yesterday, & yesterday
we know has been a long, long day.
Many times a day I think about it,
this possibility of a tomorrow,
here in the heat of day, in what
feels like an irrepressible heat
of an interminable day. I think
about what it will take to turn
this day into something not this day,
what will bring the night upon us
& pull the heat from our bodies
& quiet us. Or I think of our bodies
quietly repairing in the night
between this day & whatever

comes after this day. I can sense
the new heat, & hope it is not
just a new yesterday. I can sense
it blending with the night until
there is no difference between
the two, until there is.

THE MORE

Seth Parker

I love the Marine
loving you

I love the Marine
then I love you

I don't want to be a Marine
you can

It wouldn't have any meaning
times

I looked in the woods
and in the blue
and it startin' to seem
I loved me a Marine
and I thought
you

Zoo

Erin Perry

I dared to recollect this night, the dream
Of your election.
We walked carefully by
The cheetahs, their spots, vociferous. Oh, I am
Hungry, would you buy me an ice
Cream at the next stand? What flavors!
Strawberry and Rocky
Road, how will I decide? how will I narrow
To the cranny of your bare, gapped
Purse?
You richly give me all the flavors,
And too, a banana.
We fry in our red hats
Dear Bear,
Your round derriere, floats
In the pool
Good Grief! It stinks!
And the eels flash brightly
By.

CONTAGION

Kiki Petrosino

"It is a disaster the way African-Americans are living in many cases." –Trump

I wake up in my body & it's worse
than a war zone. My smoke-cloud of blood
my hair grenade tick tick boom. It's worse than
a war zone when I cruise past your brunch. Just
to get bread. Just ordering juice. I open my mouth
& the War rolls out, dense as a foghorn. I can't
keep from squeezing my skull. I keep time-traveling
back to the noon of my birth. Worse than a war zone
that Sunday, that night, when I wept in the War
of myself. That's the first war I knew. It was worse
than a war.

OUTLAND EMPIRE

Boomer Pinches

The great American dissonance is happening
without me, within me, notwithstanding my feelings

on the politics of all that is withheld from public consumption.
The commuters have a word for this kind of morning

where the sky is in constant ascent and billboards flicker past
attuned to your spontaneous regrets. The radio speaks

to you and you alone. Back in the dinosaur days, this was the information
superhighway and there was nothing but open space between you

and every horizon except the one you were leaving behind, the forgotten
vector of was, were, did, thought, lost, spoke, knew, loved. Listen

to your heart attack. Momentum is everything in the postseason
of the modern soul. In both souls: the one for everyday use

and the one you're keeping in reserve, honestly untouched,
just in case the rumors are true and all this will be answered for.

The question isn't which is more real and besides
there's no one left to ask. But where are my manners? Allow me

to introduce the future.

'AMERICA I DO NOT CALL YOUR NAME WITHOUT HOPE'

Dean Rader

after Neruda

*America I do not call your name without hope
not even when you lay your knife
against my throat or lace my hands
behind my back, the cuffs connecting
us like two outlaws trying to escape
history's white horse, its heavy whip
a pistolshot in the ear. Lost land,
this is a song for the scars on your back,
for your blistered feet and beautiful
watch, it is for your windmills, your
leavened machines, for your fists. It
is for your wagon of blood, for your dogs
and their teeth of fire, for your sons
and the smoke in their hearts. This is for
your verbs, your long lurk, your whirl.
This is for you and your fear, your tar,
for the white heat in your skin and
for your blue bones that one day may sing.
This is for your singing. This is for the past,
but not for what's passed. This is for daybreak
and backbreak, for dreams and for darkness.
This song is not for your fight, but it is a song
for fighting. It is a song of flame but not for burning.
It is a song out of breath but a plea for breathing.
It is the song I will sing when you knock
on my door, my son's name in your mouth.*

GOLDEN RULE

Jessica Rapisarda

This is a serious tree in a serious dusk.
A Lichtenberg figure, an aftermath
of free association. Its belly is a bees' nest.
My belly is a star. We grow more
golden. Let me tell you something
about everything. Heaven is
every cells' vibration, is friction,
is the imperceptible noise of relation.
Me is the tree is the bees is the buzzing.

But Baltimore's heart is a desert
of vagrant shopping carts and plastic bags.
Squirrels rile the honeycomb
to chorus. Manholes leak steam.
A pair of shoes hang by the laces
from a telephone wire. Someone died
here. Certainty is uncertain it seems.
Everything is hidden. Everything
is discussable. I preach the hope

of universal humming, white noise
of His voice even in one-way streets
clotted by mongrels, even in an empty taxi's
idle. Sit at our feet. This tree knows
earth's clutch fastens us to one another
like light and day. At the breach
I can incite your body to reacquaint
or I can blow out my brains with
beatitude. You will know me by the halo.

AMERICA AS THE BODIES OF TWO GAY GIRLS IN A POND AT NIGHT

Brynne Rebele-Henry

Remember this, love: our two hands and the small space between them.

Soon, you and I, we'll be gone.

Disappeared into the night forests, where queer girls

go when their country reminds them it's never really loved them

except for when they're on their knees or when they have gravestones

so small that they can no longer be found for mourning:

when our bodies are bodies without consequence,

America loves us again, America of gravestones

of lost gay girls who don't get found.

Darling, I died again last night.

All the dead queers like me don't get to heaven, they just get cried over.

Listen: I have died before and I will again.

If you look at the sky you can see in the clouds how our bodies turn to
nothing.

Love, remember this scene: three cars at night, three fires, a girl

who can burn things with just her open mouth, two girls kissing

in a pond, how our mouths were open like burning stars, how we were
holy.

Our bodies were our own countries because, darling, a body in love with
something

is both a gun and a girl. Here, with you, and me, and the night, we're all
skyline and no

country.

COMPASSION FOR THE LOSER

Elizabeth Robinson

Two homeless men

approach me after the election.

The first comes to court on a camping

ticket. I'd seen him at the polling place,

volunteering. "Hey," he says, "Sorry.

I bet I know who you voted for. Sorry.

I bet you're feeling down." "And you?"

I ask, "You happy with who won?" "Yeah,

yeah. Of course." I remember that he'd

put on his intake that his emergency contact

was the Republican Party. He

puts his hand on my shoulder: "I can

see you're feeling down. I'm sorry

about that."

A couple hours later, I

walk into Mental Health Partners for a meeting,
see another man. “You still housed? You doing alright?”
“Naw, I lost the housing. I’m on the street again.”
“Ah, I’m sorry.”
“It’s okay, it’s okay. But you look tired. Are you
upset about the election?”
“Yeah. Aren’t you? Aren’t you
worried about losing your benefits?”
“Oh, I’m fine, I was going to vote for him
anyway.” He pauses, looks at me.
Then puts his hand on my shoulder,
says gently, “But, hey, I didn’t.
This guy stopped me on the mall, talked
to me, persuaded me to vote for the Green Party.”

ELEGY FOR JIM

Matthew Rohrer

The 20 year old cat is very sick.
I took him to the vet they said he's very sick.
He's unhappy and he's making a mess.
It would be fair to say everyone's unhappy.
They are alive and they walk around
and then they have to die and no one
really loves that arrangement, how mechanistic
it is, like the clouds, each one is different but they all
break up, they rain down, they form again.
Cold comfort, as Jim would say,
and he's gone, he almost died
of the most ironic affliction
but then he just died.
His house, his yard is still there,
it's going to be his for awhile.
The autumn is plotting something dappled overhead.

HANDPRINTS ON A PAPER LANTERN

Dan Rosenberg

What's in the sky? *Airplanes, rockets,*
the moon, he says. A finished list.

He answers for always, not for now.
His shoes illuminate the ground.

The moon is there, yes, I say,
but the sun's too busy to let us see it.

Like the basil, he's unafraid of weather.
Learning the world from a sill.

Just do what water does, I say,
on the outside and the inside.

He sees no birdseed left in the brown
clay bowls. What else gets hungry, I say.

Clouds draw their curtain. *An eye*, he says.
It's closed, I say. *Open it*, he says.

HOT MESS

Jon Ruseski

I got crowded
and I'm sorry about
the colors in the catalog today

that model
is perfect
because it is a photograph

like a flag with no wind
you are part of
this gaze

yes,
the billboards
can welcome you home

the radio will play
the best mix of today
because who knows

though it's not
too late
to transmit

frankly, I thought we never would
after the light cracked
through the window this morning

and you rolled over
worried about the part of your dream you missed
and also the time

EXPATRIATE

Laurie Saurborn

Tonight the wine's colder than ever.
Tonight, flags of a lone pride decorate the masts.

Alteration is endless, meaningless as the wind
Filling the blank windows with its stories.

We watch the evening sky grow flightless.
We break into the ground one rock at a time.

Screen between us, this country knows
Within my throat there is another

Screen holding the flies of my mind
From the cake of my heart.

We gather dust and call it luck.
We watch stars sway in the orbit.

Continual are the reasons I search for home
On this horizon in a pitching house.

To exist solely in imagination is a privilege
Of detachment, I tell the wrecks accumulating.

New, the dog barely knows our scent
And runs into the street as we call her back.

PATRIOT

Mostly Americans, my friends are getting married

Again so I forswear the birds this time.

But now I want a house along Blue Ribbon Avenue,

Where sloths are elastic because they feel safe.

Standing in one room they gauge the bed in another room.

Everyone's smarter than me: Yeah, I get it.

Still, down the long hall they did not walk.

So sing along the drive: This is America

Irreplaceable and yet

Unnecessary and yet loved.

Meanwhile, Fate is a city in Texas.

Far away those homes next to homes of men, yelling.

Season of black powder of wrenches rusting in the rain.

But is it true, one sign along the Arkansas

Highway: I love and miss you.

But is this America, still debating

Whether as a woman whether I am worth.

Our roads, imported from Spain.

Our telephone call, nearing ancient.

Within a room constructed of shut doors he reads

Pages back to her, his back to her.

Lines disintegrate and it is ever so late.

After she voted she took her body she took it back home.

TWINFOLD

Lauren Shapiro

In blackout times
more about the body
from your location
you didn't know you
helped build it years
install the perch over
marsh it's easy to feel
of the dead boy
of the shooter but in
resist the urge
commit structural
continue to look away
the street the shadows
the urge to say
they were just doing
the furnace reminders
who don't understand
perched in triumph on
reminders the electronic
girls reminders
algorithms of yourself
times but you will have
places it is not used to
practice the new art
at yourself it's okay
to cross the path to
that have been bred

being vigilant might be
you have to descend
on the osprey perch maybe
were there though you
ago and watched the machine
the beautiful and sinking
sorrow for the mother
and also for the mother
blackout times one must
to humanize those who
violence also those who
from the carcasses lining
of doubt blooming
they didn't know or
their job the blasted tree
a pile of shoes the children
reminders the signs still
the manicured lawns
diaries of the traumatized
the Internet will feed you
you can like them a thousand
to move your body toward
going you will have to
of seeing of being angry
to say hello to strangers
plant aggressively the seeds
to grow in darkness

DESIRED APPRECIATION

Solmaz Sharif

Until now, now that I've reached my thirties:
All my Muse's poetry has been harmless:
American and diplomatic: a learned helplessness
Is what psychologists call it: my docile, desired state.
I've been largely well-behaved and gracious.
I've learned the doctors learned of learned helplessness
By shocking dogs. Eventually we things give up.
Am I grateful to be here? Someone eventually asks
If I love this country. In between the helplessness,
The agents, the nation must administer
A bit of hope: must meet basic dietary needs:
Ensure by tube, by nose, by throat, by other
Orifice. Must fistbump a janitor. Must muss up
Some kid's hair and let him loose
Around the Oval Office. click click could be cameras
Or the teeth of handcuffs closing to fix
The arms overhead. There must be a doctor on hand
To ensure the shoulders do not dislocate
And there must be Prince's "Raspberry Beret."
click click could be Morse code tapped out
Against a coffin wall to the neighboring coffin.
Outside my window, the snow lights cobalt
For a bit at dusk and I'm surprised
Every second of it. I had never seen the country
Like this. Somehow I can't say yes. This is a beautiful country.
I have not cast my eyes over it before, that is,
In this direction, is how John Brown put it

When he was put on the scaffold.
I feel like I must muzzle myself,
I told my psychologist.
“So you feel dangerous?” she said.
Yes.
“So you feel like a threat?”
Yes.
Why was I so surprised to hear it?

ADDRESS

John Sieracki

To the one obsessed with orgasms and letting it be known
To the ones bent in prayer for salvation
To the one knifed in the parking lot for nothing
To the one sitting quietly in contemplation
To the evangelizing ones who deny their emptiness
To the one beaten on the ass behind the shed

The little one showing everyone their fancy shoes

To the one who thinks their anger problem is sending them to hell
To the one opening a box to inspect a silk white hood
To the unnamed one identified only by strange perinatal words
To the unarmed one just buying some candy
To the one living at another's mercy
To the ignorant one

The one everyone mistakes for a spider

To the one striking names
To the one who felt like their friend was ignored
To the one who didn't die but rather gave their soul to a machine
To the one up all night worrying about losing their family
To the one who stole someone's credit card
To the wealthy one

The newly converted one who would do anything

To the one leaving
To the one who wants their name everywhere
To the one who tells everyone they play a part
To the one facing concrete walls until they die
To the one with authority whose mistake ended a life
To the one who shot to kill

The one who chose to be ruled over

To the one left
To the one who killed someone accidentally and doesn't know what to do
To the one studying things only snails can see
To the one driving a flag around town
To the one writing who just lost their train of thought
To the one for whom everything must have an ending

The merciless one

THE PARTIAL EXPLANATION

Charles Simic

Seems like a long time
Since the waiter took my order.
Grimy little luncheonette,
The snow falling outside.
Seems like it has grown darker
Since I last heard the kitchen door
Behind my back
Since I last noticed
Anyone pass on the street.
A glass of ice-water
Keeps me company
At this table I chose myself
Upon entering.
And a longing,
Incredible longing
To eavesdrop
On the conversation
Of cooks.

SONG 1108

Jordan Stempleman

FELIX, THIS IS YOUR FRIEND

I'm asking you to speak otherwise really otherwise

Beyond this history preoccupied living otherwise

Could the toppling of monuments be the commemorative

Russia has always been occupied

And preoccupied by its monuments

Has a history of destroying them

We fear we may vanish with them inconveniently destroyed

Think otherwise outside the silent room

Think otherwise

Occupied and preoccupied by its monuments

And has a history of destroying them

There was once a statue blown up beside the weak river

It is as if one pulls down an old building

And puts up a modern copy in its violence

Creators of the city this in a country toppling

To think otherwise in a silent room

Think otherwise

Occupied and preoccupied by its monuments

And has a history of destroying them

The space finally filled by a public sphere

Dramatic fictions within the social sphere

Inscribed around the base they read

"FELIX, THIS IS YOUR FREIND"

They climb upon the statue wrap a chain around its neck

Like a ghost stuck into beginnings of sky

And feel what it feels when people overdo it

I wanted to break the cycle by not eliminating the monuments
But by handling their outside differently
Think otherwise outside a silent room
Think otherwise
Occupied and preoccupied by its monuments
It has a history of destroying them
A kind of conservation overcome the conversation
The statue of Felix renamed unremarkable for a while
The statue wrapped a chain around its neck
Until it went beyond itself beyond the impulse to commemorate
An epoch event ideology figure
Until it coughed itself in half
What happens when our old loves cough themselves to pieces
Then speak to us who speaks with us
Who speaks of who they really are
Felix I'm talking about memory and apart from the monument
In memory of what to do with the future
What one world sounds like without its laudatory monologue
Felix this is unkind Felix this is a kind of recurring nightmare
Felix I'm tired of our memorial age
Think otherwise in a silent room
Think otherwise outside the occupied and preoccupied
Outside our monuments and our world
And its history of destroying them

THE DARK AGES

Bianca Stone

I.

I am up early again reading Geneviève Fraisse's *Sexual Difference and the Birth of Democracy*—

“The problem is

that as soon as one moves from women's rights to the problem of the relation between the sexes, a third argument emerges. (Page 49)

A bad telephone wire in me. Carpal Tunnel is a bitch. I'm crazy and with some wounded pride I live in this abrupt shithole apartment overlooking the drug store & Subway sandwich shop that is stamped all over America like a tribal tattoo.

Teenagers slump to school below my window while I unpack and it never ends I want to put it all back into boxes and run screaming for the interstate

but I arrange flowers and light sage the unfathomable carpeting—it's been so long since I've been intoxicated with a basket of wings and the jute box

—but I was always, I suppose, just as sad.

II.

"A man satisfied with prejudices is not concerned by the disorder of his arguments..."¹ Well, that sums up Trump.

But what about the Mobius Strip Club of Greif? I find there's
no solace in it for me today. The duties are all dolled out to the phantom
limbs

of my predecessors. I read multiple translations of Dante.
I reach the interior of my wrist

the hell hound who left a mark
thereupon,

the public vs. private activity
of self mutilation, like

the human race voting for the wrong thing.

1 (page 50)

III.

To exercise their rights, to fulfill their duties—it's *just not enough*.
We're supposed to be educated enough to make a choice!

Well,

women have long differed in their (let's call it) *social destinies*
but not in their capabilities

and one cannot forbid the exception
from crawling up
onto the dais—

The Dark Ages! Where we're laying on newspaper out front
suckling a bottle of Pepsi, arguing for the vague return of factory jobs
and the glory of middle management.

But fuck jobs. Fuck retirement plans. You have to come
in the seven minute hallucination room and see the thin gods looking
down.

Have to feel the benevolence of the universe, and the tininess
of your own fears, translated into
chauvinism, roll them out like Christmas dough
and cut them into shapes.

IV.

Second thesis: this involves love and the “fine mind.”

The woman’s mind is different. Invoked differently, even as her body is.

If democracy is to accept women, what will come of desire?

I’m not sure of argument yet.

(It was always my weakest skill, knowing my argument.)

And anyway, as a whole, reader, it is faulty to

“to speak of sex and sexuality when it is the mind at issue.”

So how am I writing this psychosexual opus

and for the minds of my women?

And Hillary Clinton, what are you doing right now?

I can’t bear to look at the news. I can only read writing *about* writing.

A national pain become public.

The club is closed for the week, out of solace. The smell
of bleach in the air.

I keep replaying it in my head

But in these genes genius ran rampant in grief and solitude.

Sexuality roars out in the poems.

Gigantic brown nipples

are the brown shadows of angels

I will give anything to see you live your life
in some semblance of happiness.

V.

On some level weakness and strength have nothing to do with the physical
form
but this relationship between the physical and the intellectual form
comes through vastly while you trip-balls in your wounded “creative space.”

Touching the infinite

leaving behind the imposed moral activities of the human mind—invent,
my darling, while you live your life, nothing irrelevant here, nothing
stopping you—invent

invent
invent

stretch out
a social destiny!

But it is pointless to tell you how I feel.
Each shred of dignity is shredded again.

VI.

O.K. I feel injured.

It looks just like it is. Like high school football
framed in a window on my birthday, running so hard
to get one more line ahead. Only a few feet of rubber grass.
The dream of the multiple selves.

My limbs are all somewhere else today.
My hands are numb, my fingertips each are
snowy television screens under the paper ceiling.

The apartment we are in is strange and small.
My things don't fit into it. Slowly I destroy my things.
I sneak them to the trash can.

Oiled a little at the joints I creak up and out
of the iron bed, I fill a fallen dictator's shoes. I feel
awful. I meant
to do something. But what good is any of it?

I let it go
sometimes—this grief—

an old heliumed balloon.
Hovering 5 feet in the air—a ghost
that can neither ascend nor fall.

THE ICE CREAM MAN

James Tate

I answered the ad in the paper. I had been unemployed for nine months and was desperate. At the interview, the man said, "Do you have much experience climbing tall mountains?" "Absolutely. I climb them all the time. If I see a tall mountain, I have to climb it immediately," I said. "What about swimming long distances in rough ocean waters, perhaps in a storm?" he said. "I'm like a fish, you can't stop me. I just keep going in all kinds of weather," I said. "Could you fly a glider at night and land in a wheat field, possibly under enemy fire?" he said. "Nothing could come more naturally to me," I said. "How are you with explosives? Would a large building, say, twenty stories high present you with much difficulty?" he said. "Certainly not. I pride myself on a certain expertise," I said. "And I take it you are fully acquainted with the latest in rocket launchers and land-mines?" he said. "I even own a few myself for personal use. They're definitely no problem for me," I said. "Now Mr. Strafford, or may I call you Stephen, what you'll be doing is driving one of our ice-cream trucks, selling icecream to all the little kids in the neighborhood, but sometimes things get tricky and we like all our drivers to be well-trained and well-equipped to face any eventuality, you know, some fathers can get quite irate if you are out of their kid's favorite flavor or if the kid drops the cone," he said. "I understand, I won't hesitate to take appropriate action," I said. "And there are certain neighborhoods where you're under advisement to expect the worse, sneak attacks, gang tactics, bodies dropping from trees or rising out of manholes, blockades, machinegun fire, launched explosives, flame throwers and that kind

of thing. You can still do a little business there if you are on your toes. Do you see what I'm saying?" he said. "No problem. I know those kinds of neighborhoods, but, as you say, kids still want their icecream and I won't let them down," I said. "Good, Stephen, I think you're going to like this job. It's exciting and challenging. We've, of course, lost a few drivers over the years, but mostly it was because they weren't paying attention. It's what I call the Santa Claus complex. They thought they were there just to make the kids happy. But there's a lot more to it than that. One of our best drivers had to level half the city once. Of course that was an extreme case, but he did what needed to be done. We'll count on you to be able to make that kind of decision. You'll have to have all your weapons loaded and ready to go in a moment's notice. You'll have your escape plans with you at all times," he said. "Yes, sir, I'll be ready at all times," I said. "And, as you know, some of the icecream is lethal, so that will require a quick judgment call on your part as well. Mistakes will inevitably be made, but try to keep them at a minimum, otherwise the front office becomes flooded with paperwork," he said. "I can assure you I will use it only when I deem it absolutely necessary," I said. "Well, Stephen, I look forward to your joining our team. They're mostly crack professionals, ex-green berets and navy seals and that kind of thing. At the end of the day you've made all those kids happy, but you've also thinned out the bad seeds and made our city a safer place to be," he said. He sat there smiling with immense pride. "How will I know which flavor is lethal?" I said. "Experiment," he said. I looked stunned, then we both started laughing.

[UNTITLED]

Lena Tsykynovska

Truthfulness
the pleasure
I experience
as a jewish pleasure
which means not
transcendental
but related
transcendently to
health and food.
There was no
anti-semitism
in the schools
says
my grandfather. My
grandma
reminds him politely, we had to
change our names. He
shrugs. Of course. A
teacher with a
name like Yankel
Pinkhusovitch...?
Ehh! He waves his
hand at the
beautiful
annoying past
and walks away.

EXCITEMENT TAX

John Vincent

In the wake of the Swedish Academy being awarded all the Nobel prizes (for having such good judgment), we began to suspect that you could fatally overdose on olives. We already knew you could on almonds, so it was a short step for the thinking person, but a giant advance for Home Economics, which grew heedlessly til mission creep choked off its first principles.

Thence forward, there was just no agreement on basic hygiene. And getting rich started to suck. There was little time to sit and play with the frayed ends of the culture. It really was like a painting from the 20s, say a Cadmus. All was plushily weird.

Then, the lights went out. Poof, poof, poof: like banks of fluorescents in library stacks. We turned to each other, one to the other, mouths open and full of question air. But no one said a thing. It was touching really, the shocked silence, made you feel for everyone, nearly feel love for everyone, but just shy of love, rather something like wonder that they weren't, and might one era ago have been, someone you knew or even some pet you loved in that more than people but less than habits way. It was just gooey-eyed humanity in action, and everything quickly accelerated into arcade beeps and tweets til we all got irritable. Tired of feeling we opted for feeling tired. We moped. It was just like our species:

Blaming our boots that we had, or ever needed, feet.

SPRING BREAKS

William Waltz

When we found the sea cucumber
quivering in the tidal pool
like placenta, I thought of you.
When I didn't know
what a sea cucumber was
or what would happen
when one poked a sea cucumber,
I thought of you. Later,
on a pier punctuated
by yellow buildings
and the architecture of a pelican,
we watched a school of rays
sail under the boards under us.
Flying in formation,
they were as magnificent
as our feet were sandy and free
of snow and the polar vortex.
A sunburnt someone shrieked
Stingrays and a salty someone said
Cownose. Did you know
a mob of devil rays is called a fever,
a word that reminds me of you?
You have named many things
from the soul of the mushroom
to the empty space that rests
in your chest after everything changes.
We prayed for manatees

in the discharge channel
by the power plant.
We laughed at the rain
and the baroque smokestacks
hiding in their veil of steam.
We spotted one gorgeous
sea cow sticking her black snout
out of the black water or
that's what we told ourselves
after driving so far to see so little,
which reminded me of the time
I drove you home, very carefully,
as if the trunk ferried key lime pies.
After all the lights in the world
had been extinguished,
I surveyed the tree-splendid night
and came away impressed
with the darkness. On a sandbar
not far from Cortez we discovered
an ink fish squirts pink
when wrested from its niche,
and then a pod of dolphins torpedoed
our wake. They were ideas rushing
to the surface. I thought of you
and your wild rains washing away
winter's grime, thawing our lakes,
releasing what was once trapped
and frozen inside of us.

LONG GAMES

Rosanne Wasserman

Such is our forward motion
we don't weep till we're stuck at red.

But that's why we read Homer:
just to see the gameboard whole

because we can't take suspense—
we jump away, we walk in circles,

open windows, throw our full attention down on green:
different games endless games brief games

that don't even matter except to take
emotion out of thought till something else grows—

But what grows? Another poison tree?
“I don't know if I can even shift into reverse”

“I don't know if I even could shift into reverse”
“I don't even know if I need to shift into reverse”

“Even I don't know if I should shift into reverse”
“If I should shift into reverse, would it come out even?”

Well, yes, but the game is much longer than we can play,
its players in both eternity and now:

the now that we can't see all of—it's the network we support—
behind and before our traffic, our lights, our turns

HOLD THAT THOUGHT

I'm trying to not overpay for experience,
though the Rose eludes me:
these fanfolded tissues & rubber bands
are far from the True Carnation.

"I'm holding a patent on reinventing the wheel,"
but we're not held to these ten questions.
"I have a list of randomly chosen facilitators picked:
They come through and they look the same year after year—

but they're not the same."

You know which ones are yours. You have to
own it. It's homemade. That junk didn't pile up all by
itself in your corner. Pity the unburied spider, lost
forever, over there.

We who have seen this before, and my darlings who've
never seen anything like this:

There is always true life in the corners. It's not
expensive. It endures. It unfolds backwards.
Its binder never snaps. We treasure it.

LOVING YOU IS COMPLICATED

Arisa White

You look at an abandoned bag and you think it can ruin your life. There is a bomb inside, why else would a parent abandon their child? The man cleaning up the post office nudges the garbage bag with his grabber, and asks if this belongs to anyone.

Hasn't he seen us avoid it? How our queue has a significant gap to accommodate its presence? How we shift to the right, like a river, having decided this is the convenient way we will go to be next-in-line? Doesn't he see we have proven we have no relationship to it, and I say, *It doesn't belong to any one of us*. With his grabber and gloved hand, he opens the bag, and just by the sound of it, aluminum cans. The wet stain on the floor confirms it's so, and maybe there was thirty cents worth of redeemables someone left on their way to getting a stamp, sending off a box, filling out a certified mail slip, but it wasn't worth taking. Thirty cents wasn't a loss.

Donald Trump is the president-elect and there are people saying they are going to Canada, another place, because here, in this country, something is ticking and Trump has the launch codes—his presidency will incite the explosions so dormant in our chests, or some Other's chest, some redneck, rich-bitch, KKK, conservative, fascist chest and so those people are ready to turn their backs to US.

Isn't this place uniquely our own that raises the hair on our arms, provokes that primal instinct on our napes, the one that makes us capable of flight? I wonder when your mother and father left you in the rooms they were supposed to occupy, in the taverns of your hometown, in the care of drug dealers and self-medicated bipolars, in hands that found your body another

place to act out their fears, did you see wings on their backs? Did you see how their blades feathered, how the feathers unfolded and flexed for the first, fifteenth, umpteenth time? And the wind coming from the flapping, did it smell like warm wool, their after-sweat skin, dry scalp, sheets tossed around the body, their pillows?

Your rage I'm supposed to love, America? Your mean words translated from some preverbal haunting? These ghosts you cannot shape because the denial keeps you bound at the navel. I can hear too many hearts beating in your words, it goes siren, your mouth too sour—the milk you drank was never your mother's and this lies in your gut. You complain you are sensitive to spice, that stomach pain comes easy to you, that you cannot stomach what may be our country's future. But last week you ordered extra jalapeños.

I realize, you and I are this country—the hard lines of our stripes, how we live in the small spaces in between, how we expect that the other will not cross, that you will let me live a life of going east to west, horizontal left, right, like some integer on the x. We are plundering for stars, for ones we see when life spins out of our control; when I cannot stand, so I curve away from, the presence of you in this world. In these years together, the urge has been to redirect your noise, shut you up by any means necessary. You are the Goliath I try to bring down every day, but since you're a derivative of Samson and gifted with a white hat—and though we can complicate this with an intersectional analysis, what is the point when that's not the truth of the American eye—you win every time.

That garbage bag in the post office, worn by a woman on Fifth Avenue in New York City. The industrial strength kind that people who deal in garbage prefer and she wore it—it was her clothes. The way it slipped off her shoulder, she had nothing on underneath. Her clavicle such a bone. Some bone, so fragile and strong. Something you don't see unless the meat has been stripped, unless you're so starved, the mask falls away, and there, the

biology of us all. Her dark brown skin over the bone in her arms, her wrists hinging back and forth, discomfort entered our eyes. I could not leave her every move—slow, deliberate. Air chilled with early winter, we pedestrians turned our collars up, tightened scarves around our necks, our hands stuffed into our pockets—we would not give even if asked. She laid down in a puddle of sun. I was sad for us both. I don't know what to do with a black woman in a black garbage bag and so I cried.

I've tossed myself away with you. That self that cannot live with my actions to be with you, so I am with you incompletely. It is convenient for you to label me the cheat and not claim your role—the one willing to pursue another in a relationship, to court with jewelry and time. The bee's knees and benevolence, this is your American exceptionalism.

I love the familiarity of your hate, pain that causes me to recall the inheritance of my sorrow: a shore of black women, black bodies who speak ocean, whose backs, when turned to America has the keloid evidence of this country's betrayal, their throats compacted with heedless Nos. In this familiarity, I continue to love the one I left for you—some perfectly beautiful part she told me she sees.

She came to my house during the evenings, after her work, and I would be typing away on my laptop, working on a poem because I was in graduate school then. The venetian blind raised about twenty inches to let the sunlight in during the day, but come evening, I was engrossed in what I was creating, the blind remained at noon. There weren't many neighbors around. My window looked out onto my roommate's garden. When night fell, my room, painted a color called pumpkin, reflected back to me. I never caught her looking, and I'm happy I didn't. I would have adjusted, maybe I would have been sucking my thumb, trying to feelthink a metaphor, mumbling loudly, combing my fingers through my hair, moving the grease to the scalp, up and down the follicles, she wouldn't have witnessed me safe.

I chose you and abandoned my safety. I am no longer friends with her. Too ashamed by the heartbreak I caused, I stepped back from my heart. If you had heard, her voice so betrayed and crying that there was nothing but water she spoke. An emotional swell that drowned what she and I called home.

I am homeless, in these years, and haven't done better. It isn't clear why I left—a burgeoning drug addiction, ADHD, emotional dependency pales in comparison to your character assassinations and vitriolic language that defaults to white and clichéd disgust. I was so sure then, those reasons for leaving were something I could stand on, something that could move me to solid ground. But we are sand or granules of cremated bodies under my feet. Each step a reminder that you are not safe here. Shifty, this place will assault your posture; it will challenge you to prove yourself.

There's an episode of *The (rapist) Cosby Show* where tap legend Sandman Simms appears, yells *Challenge* in this gravel-guttural tone, summons Heathcliff Huxtable to dance, to up the ante on his moves. Heathcliff is energetic at first, and he quickly tires, and Sandman brings out the sand, shakes it onto the floor, and the sound, a gritty slither you feel in the molars. *Challenge* is all he says. *Challenge*, and Heathcliff can't keep up with the old tap legend—*Challenge*. And you think it's funny until you're on the other side.

I was startled when I watched the *Challenger* space shuttle blow up as it made its ascent to the stars. The astronauts' bodies burned in that explosion; then Reginald Denny dragged from his truck and beaten during the Rodney King riots; then 9/11 and the dust that covered the city, the people, it entered our mouths and lungs, we couldn't stop spitting, coughing up what was both mortar and flesh.

Yes, you spat on me as I stood in the coat-check line to get my jacket and get the fuck out of that club called Era, out of the error we made. You found

my whine with a man vulgar. Scowling and talking from skin-tight teeth, a hiss that bystanders heard. For each syllable, your finger jabbed my chest. I asked you to stop, and your stream of *fuck, bitch, slut, You want to suck his dick like your thumb?* There is no safety in how you see me. This is how you imagine my body, how any bodies, black together, in Caribbean sway, too lost in some familiar uncolonizable rhythm, you spit on me.

It lands on my jeans, right thigh. The jeans, distressed and black, and your spit makes a darker stain. And all I had was our history to go on. I decided to take your marking in no non-violent way.

I'm thankful for SNCC protesters, all of them, sitting at those lunch counters, standing on picket lines, taking spit to their faces—whites getting up close, so the air they breathed, halitosis and epithets. Thankful to see them stoic, but I raged. Against the repetition of this action against my body, and you expecting I take it, because you have a legacy that protects you—entitlement to such behavior without punishment. I said to my brother, when we watched those Civil Rights documentaries, *I don't know what I would do*, but that night I realized I would fight for my body not to be demeaned. Fight until the bouncers separate me from you, tell me to take my coat and go. I walk into the chill, the early-morning night, in shock, shaking and uncomfortable.

I felt my roots, activated by generations of hate. The lights in the master's house were never off. I entered and lost my body. I lost it on the boat, in the tar and feathers, in the fires set to illuminate white faces, brightened by their violence, looking like the gates of hell opened to them each time a man was lynched. I ran, first not knowing where, hoping I could outrun my own flesh, the body's invention. I ran to the only place I could go to at that hour—home. The one we shared together, the one I was too ashamed to step into—into the reminder of our private and public wound, the one that birthed us rotten. I realized, like the depressed and alcoholic stepfather, the

sister who touches you the way the cousin did, silences that feel like eating rocks, the same ones swallowed by your greats, there is no hierarchy to the pain each of us carries.

America, we live in this country with ghosts we deny creating. Was it even, hearing you cry through the bedroom walls? Suffocating on my own tears, it is odd, why I can't leave you.

I LOOK VERY MUCH FORWARD TO BEING YOUR PRESIDENT

Laura Willwerth

thank you, Lester
sorry to keep you waiting
how lovely everything is and how wonderful you are
who is that?
is that Rudy?
oh, Rudy get up here
where is Reince?
get over here, Reince
where is Ben?
here someplace, and he is fantastic
our convention occurs at a moment of crisis
but here, at our convention, there will be no lies
so the worst of all things has happened
think of this
think of this
this is not believable but
this is what is happening
this is something that never should have happened
it should never have happened
perhaps they pressed the wrong button, they pressed the wrong button,
or perhaps worse than that
look at the mess that we're in
look at the mess that we're in
look at the damage that was done
by one whack job, one sick whack job
a disaster, humanitarian-wise

what he's done to women
as bad as Assad is, and he's a bad guy
this wonderful Girl Scout who was no Girl Scout
a guy who started out as a carpenter working for his father
a guy most comfortable in the company of bricklayers
he's screaming what they all scream
this is not my best friend
I was asked on a major show, what do you think of NATO?
and I said, well, I'll tell you, I haven't given lots of thought to NATO
to be semi-exact
Russia, Russia, Russia
I mean, it could be Russia, but it could also be China
Japan, a behemoth, selling us cars
Libya, which was her baby
Iraq, the vacuum
something with respect to Yemen and all these other places
look at Aleppo it is so sad
Mosul is so sad
and how great is Cleveland?
Lester, I tell you this, I've been all over
I've said things that, frankly, you hear these things I said
very sleazy
such a nasty
I say nothing
I say nothing
no puppet no puppet
walls do work walls do work

I've said things that, frankly, you hear these things I said
jobs, jobs, jobs
big league
big league, end of story
bye, bye
and I'm saying, where is this? is this a war-torn country? what are we
doing?
this is like medieval times
we are in a big, fat, ugly bubble and we better be awfully careful
we've lost control of things that we used to have control over
we've become very, very sloppy
we're not going to have a country
it is under such trauma
I think that it basically has fallen OK? it basically has fallen
in '17, it implodes by itself
and you will see devastation
we fought for the right in Palm Beach to put up the American flag
but where was the sanctuary
where was the sanctuary
say hello to the police
be abused by these thugs
these big, beautiful trucks
you land at LaGuardia, you land at Kennedy, you land at LAX, you land at
Newark
you see these incredible airports, and you land
you think you're going to make your air conditioners or your cars or your
cookies

that's wonderful, enjoy yourselves
good luck
we wish you a lot of luck
good luck, have a nice plant
check out a sex tape
be violent, cause fights, do bad things
Lester: it's not nice
wait a minute, Lester
want to get into the quagmire
before you solve it, you have to say the name
Donald J. Trump
I am your voice
I have no patience

I DREAMED THE SENATOR ANNOUNCED ON NATIONAL TELEVISION:

John Yau

If you are over sixty-five you should do us all a favor
You should hurry up and die as cheaply and efficiently as possible
This being America
These are the facts –
You're a drag on society
A stick stuck in the wheel of progress
I don't why we still accord you human status
When all you do is take up space and cost us money
Like a bawling infant or a surly pet
When you are neither
And you're aren't spending or saving enough
To justify your pathetic existence
Or you're spending it on laxatives because you are full of shit
And we already got enough on our hands so go on and get out

If you are over sixty-five you need too much attention
And you've already had enough from us and you shouldn't get any more
You whiny bag of flatulence
You slimy patch of expectorant sliding down a dirty wall

If you are over sixty-five the government is sending you money
Wads of money every month because you didn't earn enough
In your lifetime to take care of yourself in your old age
You weren't able to think ahead

Which means you are a failure
As worthless as the trash
My wife carries to the curb every Wednesday morning
Because I am too busy trying to figure out
How to get rid of you and you and you and you
And frankly not a single one of you is worth dealing with

If you are over sixty-five you why not choose cremation
Step into oncoming traffic
Or fall off a bridge
Just get on with it
I am sure there are enough people waiting to pick through
The little heap you accumulated in your miserable life
You might as well end the pain and start giving everything away now
You won't need it where you are going

If you are over sixty-five you are breathing my air
It's time you stop
Because my family and I need it more than you do
We always did

ANT-HEAD SUTURES

Dean Young

Once when I was in trouble,
I got my aura photographed.
Green grapefruit with a purple
dogleg where my heart should be.
Perhaps devoured by a wound.
Perhaps stuck in an orchid's throat.
Maybe moths in a birthday cake,
glitter in an obit. I can't answer
fir the stars but they seem sheepish
in their brilliance, shaking
on their daffodil stalks.
Once I too fell over 30 feet
eventually caught by a thicker branch
that's how good life can be
and I haven't even mentioned the taste
of snow on a beach or my darling
bent over the hotel bed or how
it's just a single protein missing
that stops us from biolunimecing
and there is no such thing as death,
just darkness and darkness

POEM WRITTEN WITH BUSON

Matthew Zapruder

He told us
to go outside

and if someone talked to us
to be silent

not in a hostile way
more like after the bells

have stopped performing
more like the building

glazed with sun
no longer heard

in evening wind
he stumbles suddenly

it's because they have voted
to stop thinking

life can be taken away
Girls from Ohara

owls darkening
the maples at evening

I have never been
on a difficult journey

my beloved village
no longer satisfies me

the white flower
in the darkness of the heart

the gateway at midnight
someone goes through

to become invisible
in the capital

when the lanterns of finance
have been extinguished

the two of them
feel strengthened

by wine and the songs
that make the path

that can only
be seen in darkness

hours later the rustling
of her robe

says an old well
Is a frightening thing

*

(Note: this poem was written using a process for collaborating with the dead, invented by the poet Matt Rohrer. I was thinking of him and his wife in Brooklyn, as I began to write this in California, sitting outside on a warm October night, using a combination of my own lines and various translations of the great 18th century haiku poet Yosa Buson, and also as I finished it in the days after the election.)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Michael Burns, "Testify" from *Night of the Grizzly*, Moon City Press, 2012.
Reprinted by permission.

Kimiko Hahn's poem "Unidentified" contains lines lifted from "An Arizona Morgue Grows Crowded," James C. McKinley, Jr. *New York Times*, July 28, 2010.

Nazim Hikmet, "The World, My Friends, My Enemies, You, and the Earth," from *Things I Didn't Know I Loved: Selected Poems of Nazim Hikmet*, translated by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk, Persea Books, 1975.

Brenda Hillman, "From *Seasonal Works with Letters on Fire* (Wesleyan University Press, 2013). Copyright © 2013 by Brenda Hillman.
Reprinted with the author's permission.

Osip Mandelstam, from *The Voronezh Notebooks*. Translated by Andrew Davis. New York Review of Books, 2016. Reprinted with permission of translator and publisher.

Lynn Melnick, "Poem Entering the Apple Valley Target," first published in Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-Day, 2013.

Diane di Prima, "Rant," from *Pieces of a Song, Selected Poems*, City Lights, 1990. Reprinted by permission.

Solmaz Sharif, "Desired Appreciation" from *Look*. Copyright © 2016 by Solmaz Sharif. Reprinted with the permission of Graywolf Press, www.graywolfpress.org.

James Tate, "The Ice Cream Man" from *The Ghost Soldiers*, Ecco, 2009.



chess board, © Rosamond Purcell